



**BACKSTAGE PASS
WITH DUSTIN LYNCH**

**THE JUDDS PLAY FOR
KEEPS IN LAS VEGAS**

**WE WANT
YOUR VOTE!
COUNTRY'S
MOST
BEAUTIFUL
WOMEN**

NASH Country Weekly

COUNTRY FOR LIFE | OCTOBER 19, 2015

**TOBY
KEITH**

TALKS NEW
ALBUM, OLD
TRADITIONS
AND BEING A
GRANDDAD

FAMILY MAN

**NASH
NEXT**

**ARTIST
SPOTLIGHT
JANA
KRAMER**

**PARMALEE
FINDS
HARMONY
AFTER
NEAR-DEATH
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LETS HIS
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4 2>

JOSH THOMPSON

J O S H THOMPSON CHANGE THE LOST RECORD V O L . 1

includes

**“Same Ol’
Plain Ol’ Me”**
and

**“Livin’
Like Hank”**

FEATURING JUSTIN MOORE



JoshThompsonOfficial.com

ole  The Orchard
majorly indie

1981 MONDAY,
OCT. 12



Pure Entertainment

BARBARA MANDRELL was everyone's favorite lady at the 15th annual Country Music Association Awards show on Oct. 12, 1981, at the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville. The star of song, stage and television co-hosted the program with **MAC DAVIS** and went on to win a pair of major awards. Early in the evening, Barbara took home the Female Vocalist of the Year honor for the second time in her career. But she also vaulted herself into the CMA record book when she repeated as Entertainer of the Year. Barbara became the first artist to win that award two consecutive times. This also marked the first year for the Horizon Award, given to a new or emerging artist on the country scene. That first Horizon honor went to "Somebody's Knockin'" hitmaker Terri Gibbs.

2015

OCT. 15:

DUSTY KICKBACKS

LUKE BRYAN resumes his Kick the Dust Up Tour after completing the last stop on his annual Farm Tour in early October. Luke begins the West Coast leg of the tour on Oct. 15 in Sacramento, Calif., then heads to San Diego the following night.



OCT. 16:

THINK GREEN

It's practically a **LEE GREENWOOD** Friday at the Grand Ole Opry on Oct. 16. First, Lee performs on the show along with rising new star **CANAAN SMITH** and other guests. Immediately following the Opry show, Lee will sign copies of his patriotic children's book, *Proud to Be an American*, at the Opry Shop.



OCT. 17: DINER EXILE

Legendary country/pop band **EXILE** joins guest host **LARRY GATLIN**, sitting in for Larry Black, on the Oct. 17 edition of *Larry's Country Diner* on RFD-TV.



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Who is the fairest in all the land? Cast your vote for Country's Most Beautiful Woman.

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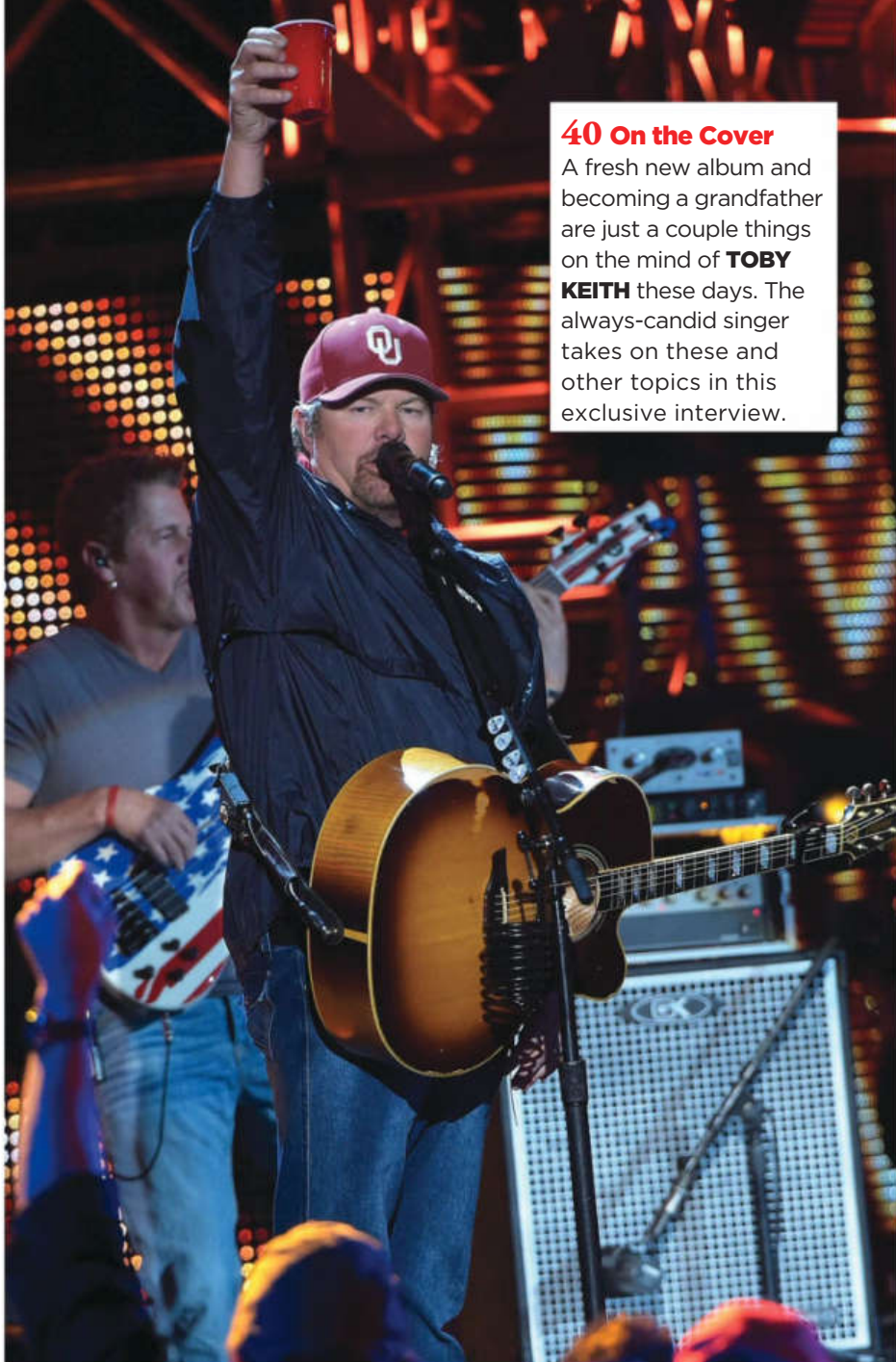
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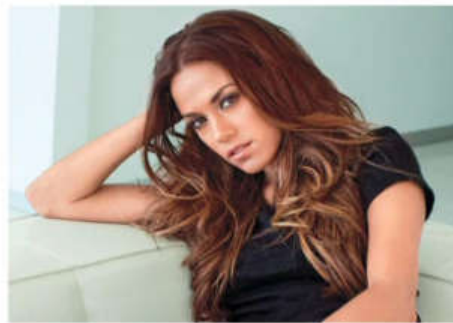
A fresh new album and becoming a grandfather are just a couple things on the mind of **TOBY KEITH** these days. The always-candid singer takes on these and other topics in this exclusive interview.

PLUS!



27 JANA KRAMER

Career and personal life come together blissfully with the launch of her current album and the upcoming arrival of her first child.



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FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Readers,

Toby Keith has a new album out, and he's been talking to *Nash Country Weekly* about creating its music.

But we sat down with Toby at his Nashville offices and dug deeper into what makes him tick. I'm not sure many know that Toby has been married for 31 years—quite a feat in the celebrity world—and that he's awaiting the arrival of his third grandchild. So, we get personal with Toby, who dishes on how success allows for

more family time. But we couldn't possibly do this story without giving you the scoop on his new album, *35 MPH Town*. Check it all out on page 40.

In the Nash Next section, we sit down with first-time mom-to-be Jana Kramer, who fills us in on overcoming a recent rough patch, what she's expecting from motherhood and making music at one of the happiest times in her life. We also have part three in our four-part series on The Oak Ridge Boys, getting artistic with William Lee Golden and his hobbies of photography and painting.

You won't want to miss next week's issue, on stands Oct. 19, as we talk exclusively with George Strait about his first album in two years and battling that pesky retirement rumor. He did *not* retire, as our story will make perfectly clear.

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK!

LISA KONICKI, EDITOR IN CHIEF

FROM THE READER



Shoot us an email, a comment or a tweet and let us know what you think!

Letters, Nash Country Weekly, 506 2nd. Ave. South, Suite 200, Nashville, TN 37210

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Please include your name, address and daytime phone number with all correspondence. Nash Country Weekly assumes no responsibility for returning unsolicited material, including, but not limited to, photographs, artwork, manuscripts and letters. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

LOOKING GOOD

The new look of *Nash Country Weekly* is bright and slick. I'm hoping you are not doing away with the birthdays (I like to keep up with everyone) or the crossword and wordsearch puzzles. I really like them. I have really enjoyed the magazine for several years now. Please don't change everything.

MICHELE BURNETT | Benton, Tenn.

EDITOR'S REPLY:

Thanks for your kind letter, Michele. I can safely say that birthdays are here to stay (see The Brew section), and our current puzzles will remain as well.

FACEBOOK

REGARDING THE LOSS OF EDDIE MONTGOMERY'S SON:

I can not imagine the heartache this

family is going thru. My heart and thoughts are with them.

MARTINA HIGGINS-MORGAN

Thoughts and prayers for family on the loss of their son.

JACKIE FRASER

I'm so crying right now . . . my 19 yr. old boy is my world . . . I can only pray and send the family condolences.

LIGIA MARIE

I am so sorry for your loss. You are in my prayers. Stay strong.

PAULETTE CHAPIN

So sorry for your loss. Praying for you and your family.

RUBY CRUTCHFIELD REGISTER

TWITTER

Actually not sure if anyone has a better outlook on life than

@littlebigtown. Great piece.

LAURA LORENZ | @LaLorenz

@countryweekly @ScottyMcCreery @ClareDunnMusic Clare Dunn is seriously awesome! I love her style and she's amazingly sweet!! CAMANDA | @ilovelukebryan

["Always on My Mind" is one] of my fave Willie Nelson songs. @RoyaltyCheck does it justice. Definitely worth a listen.

LEAH | @Leah2455

So, who is the HOTTEST COUNTRY BACHELORETTE? @Lauren_Alaina, THAT'S WHO! Named by @countryweekly!!!

LAURENALAINANOW
@LaurenAlainaNow

@NASHFM1033 @countryweekly CONGRATS to @Lauren_Alaina this year's hottest bachelorette! ROBIN SWAFFORD JENSEN
@rjensen08

@oakridgeboys 4 features, 4 separate magazines leading up to @countrymusicof induction. @RASterban feature on stands now @countryweekly DUANE ALLEN
@duaneallen

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CYW VACA15

**NASH Country
Weekly**

COUNTRY FOR LIFE

FIRST TAKE

SUNNY FORECAST

The *Today* show's Al Roker shares a laugh, smile and selfie with Brad Paisley, who stopped by to debut his new video for "Country Nation" and perform "Crushin' It" for the crowd.





THE COUNTRY BREW

A SWEET TASTE OF ALL THINGS COUNTRY

Opening Act

FAMILY REUNION

Las Vegas will get a double dose of girl power when mother-daughter duo **THE JUDDS** reunite for Girls Night Out at The Venetian Theatre. The nine-show residency, which starts Oct. 7 and ends Oct. 24, will focus on the classic hits that Naomi and Wynonna created during their tenure, while also allowing Wynonna some space to show off her solo work—including brand-new music from an upcoming album. Girls Night Out marks Wynonna and Naomi's first time performing together in five years, so don't miss out on this one.

photo by Kristin Barlowe/H&O PR

THERE HE IS Miss America judge Brett Eldredge (front right) has it all—beauty, style and poise; (below) **FEAR THE BEARDS** Jamey Johnson (left) and Chris Stapleton look like a couple of brothers-in-beards.



(Above) **THIS KISS** After 20 years of marriage, Tim McGraw and Faith Hill are still a couple of cute puckers; (left) **ROYAL TREATMENT** Ashley Monroe (left) and Cam sandwich Ty Herndon at a show in Kansas City.



(Clockwise from above) **MAYBE IT WAS MOUNTAIN HOME** Pam Tillis and Blake Shelton catch up at the Mountain Home Music Festival in Idaho; **LUNCH IS SERVED** Seinfeld fans should recognize the familiar NYC locale where Scotty McCreery and crew ate lunch; **PERRY POWER** All it took was a well-placed Perry pointer finger to put the Tower of Pisa on tilt; **CALLING DIBS** Steven Tyler and Kelsea Ballerini announce the CMA nominations live on *Good Morning America*.



Pam & Blake courtesy Pam Tillis Facebook; Scotty & band courtesy Scotty McCreery Instagram; TBP courtesy The Band Perry Facebook; Steven & Kelsea by Ida Mae Astute/ABC

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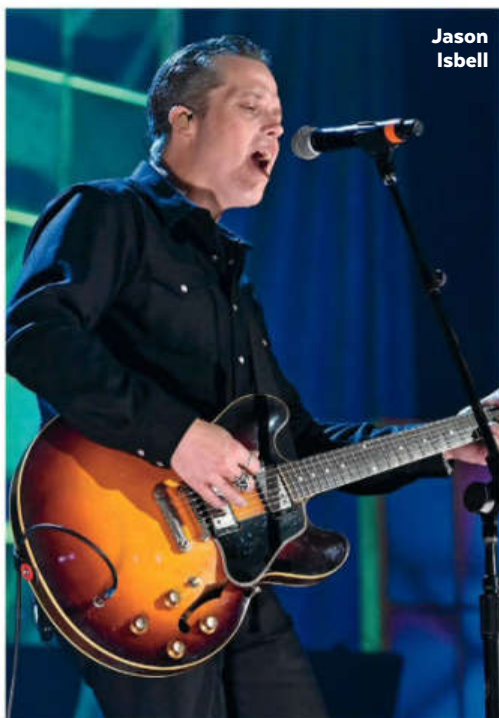


"A+" FOR AMERICANA The 14th annual Americana Music Festival invaded Nashville Sept. 15-20 as more than 100 performers showcased their rootsy skills. The highlight of the week-long event was the Americana Honors & Awards Show at the Ryman Auditorium that featured performances from a who's who of heavyweights, including Marc Ribot (above left) and Buddy Miller.



Shakey Graves

Ry & Ricky, Dave & Gillan and Jewel by Rick Diamond/Americana Music Association; Marc & Buddy, Nikki & W&MB, Lucinda, HP and Jason by Erika Golding/Americana Music Association; all other photos by Terry Wyatt/Americana Music Association



Jason Isbell



Randy Rogers (left) and Wade Bowen



Jim Lauderdale



Rosanne Cash and Keb Mo



Lucinda Williams accepts the Album of the Year Award



Jewel



Ry Cooder (left) presents
Ricky Skaggs with the
Lifetime Achievement Award



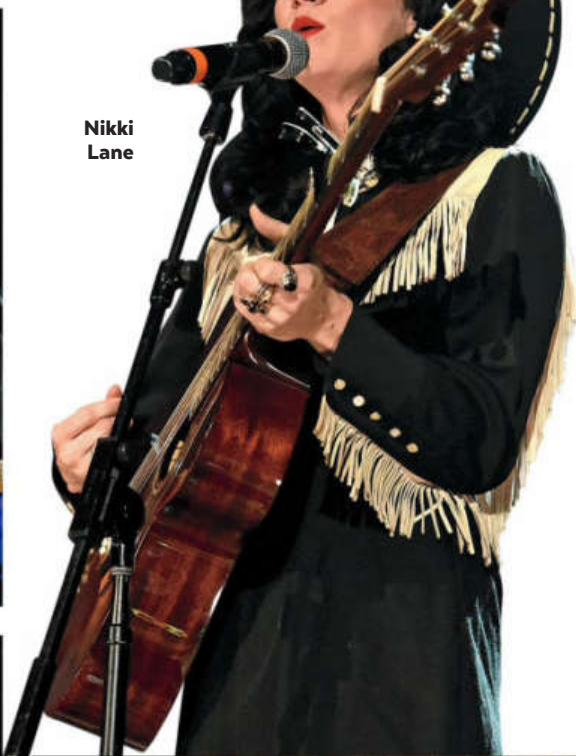
The Mavericks



Ruth Ward (left) and
Madisen Ward of Madisen
Ward and the Mama Bear



Whitey
Morgan



Nikki
Lane



Don Henley with
Lee Ann Womack



Loretta
Lynn



Dave
Rawlings
and
Gillian
Welch



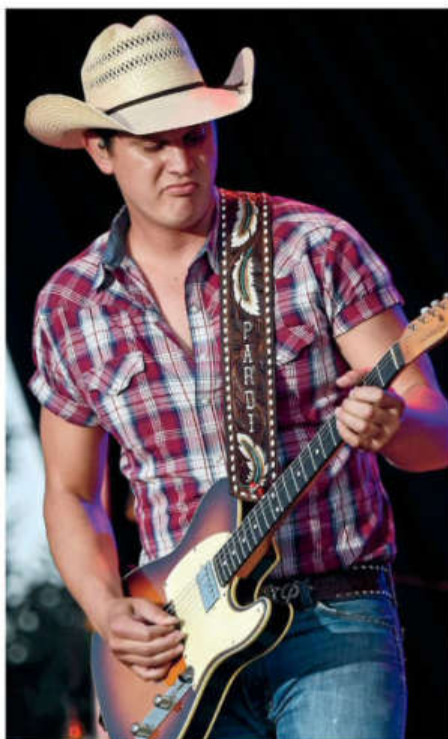
Hot Rize, doubling as Red
Knuckles & the Trailblazers

WAR DAMN KENNY

If there is a short list somewhere of artists who get to be the first musicians to perform in a stadium, odds are **KENNY CHESNEY**'s name is at the very top of that list. The superstar entertainer/touring juggernaut will soon get the significant honor of being the first musician to play Jordan-Hare Stadium in Auburn, Ala., home of Auburn University's Tigers. The show, held in conjunction with the inaugural Music & Miracles Superfest and presented by the Chicken Salad Chick Foundation, will be held on April 23, 2016. It will mark the official first date of Kenny's 2016 stadium tour, which will include guests **MIRANDA LAMBERT, SAM HUNT** and **OLD DOMINION**.

"There is something about college football that inspires me," said Kenny in a release. "There is so much heart, so much dignity to playing for the honor of your school. There are, obviously, a lot of good times and great memories made at the games, and those guys on the teams play all out in ways most people don't realize. Every time I get to play somewhere with the kind of history Auburn has, it pushes me a little harder to really raise the bar. And the mission and heart behind Music & Miracles raises that bar higher still."

The Music & Miracles Superfest will raise funds for hunger issues and cancer initiatives in the Auburn community.



ON TOUR > JON PARDI ALL TIME HIGH TOUR

OCT. 9
Anaheim, Calif.
House of Blues

OCT. 15
Orlando, Fla.
House of Blues

NOV. 7
Cincinnati
Bogart's

NOV. 21
Myrtle Beach, S.C.
House of Blues

DEC. 17
Washington, D.C.
Fillmore

DEC. 18
New York City
Irving Plaza

JAN. 7
Indianapolis
Egyptian Room

JAN. 8
Cleveland, Ohio
House of Blues

JAN. 9
Detroit
St. Andrew's Hall

JAN. 14
Boston
House of Blues

JAN. 15
Philadelphia
Theatre of Living Arts

JAN. 16
Huntington, N.Y.
Paramount

JAN. 22
Houston
House of Blues

JAN. 23
Dallas
House of Blues

JAN. 28
Greensboro, N.C.
Cone Denim
Entertainment
Center

JAN. 29
Charlotte, N.C.
Fillmore

JAN. 30
Raleigh, N.C.
The Ritz



DARN TWEETIN'

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Always fun walking 15-20 minutes somewhere and finding out it's closed on Thursday haha #wetried.
ChrisYoungMusic
@ChrisYoungMusic

Ahhh good to be in Wichita, Kansas!! The vizeb are good here.
Brian Kelley
@PlayBkPlay

My @phillies just need to lose 5 of their last 10 games to reach 100 losses this season ... I believe they CAN DO IT!!!!

Joe Bonsall
@joebonsall

OK, I was supposed to sing a song for a San Diego fan, and I said I would, but I forgot what song she wanted. . .Help?
Jewel
@jeweljk

Hitting up the Georgetown @Nike store!
#Jordans #ALLDAY
Neil Perry
@theneilperry

With his head on my shoulder, his paw on my arm, I am once again reminded of the unconditional love of a dog.
Wynonna Judd
@WynonnaMusic



(From left) Jeffrey Steele, Jaren Johnston, Keith Urban and Tom Douglas

RAISE A GLASS

**NO. 1 PARTY FOR
"RAISE 'EM UP"
THE SUTLER SALOON
NASHVILLE**

KEITH URBAN didn't write his hit duet with Eric Church, "Raise 'Em Up," but he's certainly glad that Tom Douglas, Jaren Johnston and Jeffrey Steele did. Keith and Eric took the threesome's song to No. 1 in May, and Keith celebrated the feat at an industry party at Nashville restaurant/music venue the Sutler Saloon on Sept. 16. Joining Keith for the fun were

the three writers along with the song's producer, Nathan Chapman. Eric was unable to attend but sent along a congratulatory video message.

Before the party, Keith remarked to a variety of reporters on hand that "Raise 'Em Up" instantly clicked with him. "It's such a beautifully written lyric and melody," Keith said. "We've been ending our shows with

it on this particular tour. Everybody, no matter where you're from or how old you are, seems to relate to it."

Typically, Keith performs the celebrated tune at his No. 1 parties, and this time was no exception. Keith, the songwriters and Nathan took the Sutler stage and played a rocking version of "Raise 'Em Up" to the delight of the crowd.

David Allan Owe

DAVID ALLAN COE is living up to his "Outlaw" moniker. He owes the IRS nearly half a million dollars in back taxes and has pled guilty to one count of impeding and obstructing IRS laws. According to a news release from the U.S. Attorney's Office, instead of paying the taxes in full, David Allan spent the money earned from live concert performances on "other debts and gambling." David Allan, who is awaiting a maximum sentence of three years in prison and a hefty fine, is known for helping usher in the Outlaw movement of the 1970s.



THE OUTSIDER IS IN

ERIC CHURCH took a rough, winding path on his way to country stardom, and that journey has been chronicled in a new exhibit, *Eric Church: Inside the Outsider*, at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville. The exhibit, now open to the public, features a variety of stage wear, song manuscripts, awards and photos from Eric's personal collection.

Among the special items in the exhibit is a note from George Strait thanking Eric for performing on his *The Cowboy Rides Away* farewell tour in 2014. Also on display are Eric's ACM and CMA Album of the Year awards for *Chief* and the stage costume Eric sported in his "Creepin'" music video, along with a pair of his trademark aviator sunglasses.

Prior to the official opening, Eric welcomed media and other invited guests to a sneak peek of his exhibit. Eric noted that it took several people working together to help him accomplish his goals. "It's not about me, because it's not possible for one person to make that happen," Eric said. "I can't say how proud I am [of the exhibit]. I'm blown away by where we are and by where we came from."

And you're sure to be blown away by *Eric Church: Inside the Outsider*, which runs at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum through February 2016.



True GRIT

To commemorate their upcoming 50th anniversary in 2016, the **NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND**—known for decades-spanning hits like "Mr. Bojangles" and "Fishin' in the Dark"—performed a celebratory showcase at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium in September. The event, which featured special performances from **VINCE GILL**, **JERRY JEFF WALKER**, **JOHN PRINE**, **JACKSON BROWNE** and others, was taped for PBS and will air in March.



The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band kicks off the night's festivities with "My Walkin' Shoes."

CANADIAN COUNTRY

GORD BAMFORD was the big winner at the **Canadian Country Music Awards** on Sept. 13 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, taking home trophies for Male Artist of the Year and Single of the Year ("Where a Farm Used to Be"). The CCMAs honor country stars with Canadian roots. This year's festivities featured performances by **PAUL BRANDT**, **HIGH VALLEY** and **JOHNNY REID** as well as **FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE** and **THOMAS RHETT**.



FANS' CHOICE AWARD
Johnny Reid

ALBUM OF THE YEAR
Lifted
Dallas Smith

FEMALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR
Jess Moskaluke

MALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR
Gord Bamford

GROUP OR DUO OF THE YEAR
High Valley

SINGLE OF THE YEAR
"Where a Farm Used to Be"
Gord Bamford

VIDEO OF THE YEAR
"Upside Down"
Dean Brody

ROOTS ARTIST OF THE YEAR
Lindi Ortega

RISEING STAR
Madeline Merlo

CCMA DISCOVERY AWARD
Raquel Cole



▲ **KRISTEN KELLY** and Jimmy Stanley kicked things off on Sept. 2 when Jimmy literally got down on one knee during a showcase at Nashville's The Listening Room to ask Kristen to be his bride.



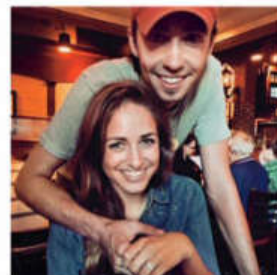
▲ On Sept. 5, **CAM** announced that she would become Mrs. Adam Weaver after her fella put a ring on it in an outdoor proposal.

PUT A RING ON IT

Love was most definitely in the air in September!



▲ **ANGIE JOHNSON** looked breathtaking when she tied the knot with new hubs Patrick Johnston on Sept. 12, and the best part: she only had to add one letter to her last name.



▲ Country newcomer **MO PITNEY** popped the question on Sept. 10, asking fellow musician Emily Bankester of The Bankesters to make beautiful music with him.



▲ **RAY SCOTT** looked especially dashing in a classic tux when he exchanged "I dos" with the stunning Stacey Beard in a sweet Kentucky ceremony.

BIRTHDAYS

OCT. 13, 1959
MARIE OSMOND

OCT. 12, 1969
MARTIE MAGUIRE
of Dixie Chicks

OCT. 13, 1946
LACY J. DALTON

OCT. 13, 1969
RHETT AKINS

OCT. 14, 1974
NATALIE MAINES
of Dixie Chicks

OCT. 15, 1969
KIMBERLY SCHLAPMAN
of Little Big Town

OCT. 17, 1941
EARL THOMAS CONLEY

OCT. 17, 1958
ALAN JACKSON

OCT. 18, 1980
JOSH GRACIN

COUNTRY COUTURE

Country celebs like **BIG & RICH**'s **BIG KENNY ALPHIN**, **PHIL VASSAR**, **THE CADILLAC THREE** and **OLD DOMINION** will perform at the **OFF THE RECORD** fashion show in Nashville, Nov. 1. Off the Record not only features Nashville's hottest country acts, but also spotlights the city's growing fashion industry. Local designers will showcase their newest collections, including the **TRIBE KELLEY** line from **FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE**'s Brian Kelley and wife Brittney, and Ani & Ari, who make the spectacular corsets worn by country artists like **MIRANDA LAMBERT** and **RAELYNN**. The event raises money for Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee.

OFF THE RECORD

Facial Awareness

It's hard to imagine **JAMEY JOHNSON** without a beard, and it's getting hard to remember what **SAM HUNT** looked like before he sprouted his. The right beard, on the right face, can make the manliest man look even more masculine, but growing one isn't a sign of laziness. It takes some effort to keep that crop of facial hair in control. So, if you're a beard man, or looking forward to supporting the battle against cancer by participating in "No-Shave November," get ready to get groomed.



Jamey Johnson



John Osborne
of Brothers Osborne



Dierks Bentley

BEARD OILS



Ridge Runner
Beard Oil
\$18
themodcabin.com



Vintage Blue's
Moose Beard Oil
\$18
themoosenashville.com



Woodsman
Beard Oil
\$20
amazon.com

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darbysmart.com



Da Balm
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badricks.com



Man Up
Beard Balm
\$15
hickoryridgesoaps.com

Tobacco Row's
Moose Beard Balm
\$18
themoosenashville.com



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floral arrangement in
genuine crystal

THOMAS KINKADE "Victorian Christmas" Illuminated Crystal Vase

It Lights
Up

Individually
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arrangement
of lifelike
poinsettia
and pine

Accented
with glitter-
frosted pine
cones and
"ice"-tipped
branches

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Shown much smaller than actual size of appr. 19 inches tall. Vase is appr. 8 inches tall. Requires 3 "AA" batteries (not included).

www.bradfordexchange.com/20790

Victorian Christmas II ©1992 Thomas Kinkade ©2015 BGE 01-20790-001-BI

RESERVATION APPLICATION

SEND NO MONEY NOW

THE
BRADFORD EXCHANGE
-HOLIDAYS-

9345 Milwaukee Avenue · Niles, IL 60714-1393

YES. Please reserve the Thomas Kinkade "Victorian Christmas" Holiday Crystal Vase for me as described in this announcement.

Limit: one per order.

Please Respond Promptly

Signature

Mrs. Mr. Ms.

Name (Please Print Clearly)

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State

Zip

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BEANS ABOUT IT

TV'S **LORIANNE CROOK** SERVES UP A SIDE DISH THAT'LL FILL YOU UP WITHOUT PUTTING ON THE POUNDS.

Lorianne Crook has spent a good part of her life interviewing country's top celebrities on the syndicated *Crook & Chase* TV show. Fans likely know that Lorianne is also an expert cook, as she's demonstrated on her *Celebrity Kitchen* series that ran on TNN and GAC for several years.

For that show, Lorianne was usually joined by a country star who shared the kitchen with her to prepare a favorite recipe. And here's some welcome news for fans: classic episodes of *Celebrity Kitchen* can now be seen on the Heartland television network, weekdays at 3 p.m. ET. Here's one of Lorianne's original recipes for her Nutritious Baked Beans, a hearty side dish that's also good for you, because it contains no added fat. Enjoy!

BOB PAXMAN



LORIANNE CROOK'S NUTRITIOUS BAKED BEANS

2 ½ cups canned
Great Northern beans
(if you prefer, you can
soak 1 ¼ cups dried
beans overnight)

1 large onion,
diced into small pieces

2 tbsp. molasses
(you can substitute
real maple syrup)

1 tbsp. apple
cider vinegar

1 tbsp. tomato paste

1 tsp. dry mustard

Salt and pepper
to taste

If you are using dried beans, **DRAIN** the soaking water and return beans to pot. **ADD** 3 cups fresh water, bring to a boil, then simmer on low until the beans are tender, about two hours or more. Before draining, reserve about ¾ cup of the liquid.

If you are using canned beans, **DRAIN** them, reserving the liquid. Be sure to rinse the beans to remove excess salt.

Heat the oven to 350°.

COMBINE all the ingredients, including the reserved bean liquid, in a baking dish (preferably with a lid). **BAKE** covered for 30 minutes. **REMOVE** the lid and bake for an additional 30 minutes until the baked beans are bubbling.

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Single

Dustin Lynch

"Mind Reader"

BROKEN BOW RECORDS



Fresh off of his second consecutive *Billboard* No. 1 song, Dustin Lynch is back on the airwaves with his sophomore album's third offering, "Mind Reader." It's a bedtime story we've heard before: the girl with the "little tore-up jeans," sweet perfume and need-you-now lips meets the man of the hour who just wants to "take this party back to my place." While the narrative is stale, Dustin does a commendable job giving the racy mid-tempo an R&B edginess. However, if sexy mid-tempo was the route Dustin and the label wanted to lean toward with a new release, I wish they would have dropped the album's "Middle of Nowhere," a much more compelling example of Dustin's versatility. Sonically, "Mind Reader" seems confused, juggling synths and distorted guitar with steel (I never thought I'd complain about steel, but it seems out of place here). Nonetheless, with its R&B peppering, the song hits radio at an opportune time and, perhaps, "Mind Reader" is destined to follow suit in the wake of previous No. 1 singles "Where It's At (Yep, Yep)" and "Hell of a Night."

LONG STORY SHORT:

Where will "Mind Reader" peak on the charts? I'm thinking of a number between 0 and 20.

JIM CASEY



THE NCW JUKEBOX



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“Beers Ago”

“I Like Girls
That Drink Beer”

“Drinks After
Work”

“Drunk
Americans”

“Rum Is
the Reason”

“Beer for
My Horses”

LOOK FOR THIS
NASH COUNTRY WEEKLY
PLAYLIST ON

rdio

Albums



Jana Kramer

Thirty One

ELEKTRA RECORDS NASHVILLE

B

Thirty One (owing to Jana's current stage in life) establishes the singer/actress as a versatile vocalist, though not an especially identifiable one. Known mainly for blissfully romantic fare like her singles “Love” and “I Got the Boy,” which both deserved far better treatment from radio (the singles are included here), Jana shows that she can shift the tempo gears on the opening track “Boomerang,” co-written by the formidable duo Maddie & Tae. It's a sassy—and very country—number propelled by a driving drumbeat in which Jana asserts that she's not what the title implies. She tries for the same attitude on the second cut, “Don't Touch My Radio,” which fails to dial up anything positive. The song sounds oddly like Luke Bryan's “Kick the Dust Up,” including its similar Eastern-style banjo sound, a coincidence that can only be called “unfortunate,” in polite terms. Even on one of the best selections, the clever “Said No One Ever,” Jana's phrasing and inflections are more remindful of Taylor Swift. Jana's best effort comes with the appropriately titled final track, “Last Song,” where every ache of the heart comes through with impassioned emotion. The songs here are mostly good, but it's hard to discern a real identity from the album as a whole. **BOB PAXMAN**



Josh Thompson

Change: The Lost Record, Vol. 1

OLE MUSIC GROUP

A-

It remains puzzling that Josh Thompson hasn't received the acclaim that he deserves. If ever there was a contemporary version of Merle Haggard, arguably Josh is it. His newest release, *Change: The Lost Record, Vol. 1*, (yes, there will be a volume 2) picks up nicely where his grossly overlooked debut album, *Way Out Here*, left off. Take American, blue-collar sensibilities paired with sophisticated and clever songwriting, add ample amounts of Josh's bourbon-soaked vocals and straight-up country production, and you find what's missing in today's country music scene. “Same Ol' Plain Ol' Me” is another installment in Josh's repertoire of regular-guy songs, while “Work in the Morning” is a sing-along goodie for a Friday night. Josh takes an uncharacteristically serious turn in the heart-wrenching “Got to Go to Heaven,” but he gets back to his humorous self on the banjo-infused collaboration with Justin Moore, “Livin' Like Hank.” **TAMMY RAGUSA**

Single



Lauren Alaina

“Next Boyfriend”

MERCURY NASHVILLE

B

Lauren Alaina's new single, “Next Boyfriend,” makes a case for the 20-year-old as a grown woman, aware of her sexuality. Melodically, it has Taylor Swift's sweetness but Lauren's impressive vocal gymnastics take it somewhere else completely. It's built on a gender-flipped pick-up line (*You look a lot like my next boyfriend*) that lets Lauren be the aggressor. Unfortunately, it also falls victim to a repetitive final minute—but before then, it's an encouraging glimpse at Lauren's next phase.

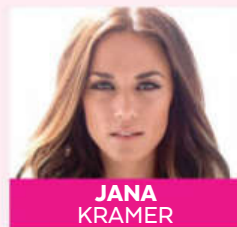
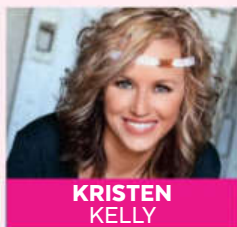
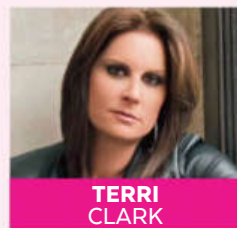
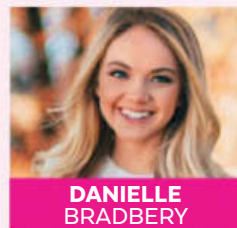
JON FREEMAN

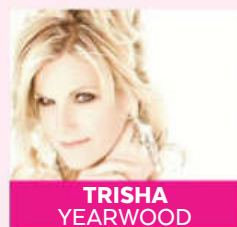
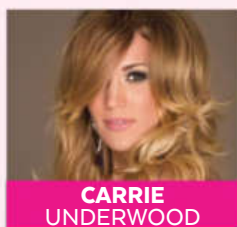
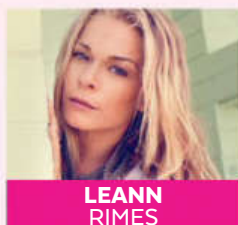
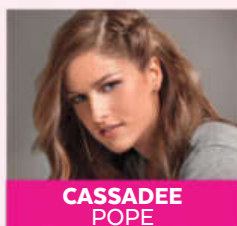
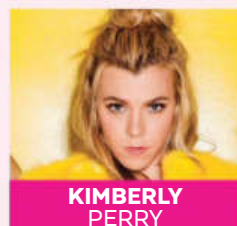
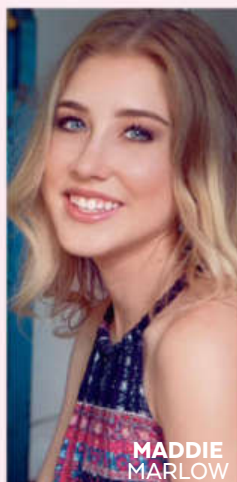
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BROOKE HOGAN

Brooke may be best known as the daughter of professional wrestler Hulk Hogan, though she was also a reality TV star on *Hogan Knows Best* and *Brooke Knows Best*. In addition, there is also a musical side to the 27-year-old. After dabbling in other genres, Brooke is currently living in Nashville and working on her debut country album, along with preparing a brand-new reality TV show.

GAYLE THOMPSON

Current Single

"Girlfriend"

Hometown

Tampa, Fla.

Musical Soundtrack of her Childhood

Carly Simon, Luther Vandross, Lynyrd Skynyrd and Earth, Wind & Fire

Famous Father

"I still always see pieces of my parents and what they taught me in everything I do. Seeing them go through the fame, it definitely didn't make me think, 'Wow—I want to be famous too.' I just admired how hard they worked. They really did work hard, and I loved seeing them follow through on ideas and dreams and creating things. Or if it was embarking on things

together, they were always so creative and they followed through in everything that they did. I got a little bit of that workhorse in my system, so I guess I like the challenge."

Back to TV

"Being on TV isn't a bad thing. I just think I had a bad emotional experience with it, because of all the stuff my family went through. And because we were kind of the pioneers in that. It was just us and the Osbournes who were the first ones on TV, so we didn't really know what to expect. Now these shows are shot seamlessly, and it's easy, and you know what you're doing. It's now a job,

and you show up for your job and you get paid. It's not my dream to be a ham or to have my mug on TV. I love writing songs, and I love that I have the ability to reach out to people. That's my main thing. So stepping back onto reality TV is a little bit scary, but I feel like it's also a second chance to have fun and to also enjoy it and to do it the way I want to do it now."

Music That Matters

"I hope that my music is something that inspires people, and it's something that they know is from my heart. I'm not trying to win over the world. I'm just trying to make the people who

believe in me happy. Hopefully we can make a few new believers. But most of all, I hope that I change or inspire or help something or some group of people, whether it be helping kids or saving animal lives."

New Album

"I'm a beach girl, so I grew up on Sublime, things like that. There's always a little bit of a fun, light element to [my music]. The chord progressions were hand-picked by me. I like a certain sound. And I would say it's like a mixture of . . . there's a little bit of, I like to call it 'bra-country,' instead of bro-country. Like a Fleetwood Mac that went to the beach."

photo courtesy Music City Media

NASH *NEXT*

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

photo courtesy WMG

Saving Grace

STORY BY JON FREEMAN

JANA KRAMER EMERGES FROM
A TURBULENT TIME WITH A NEW
ALBUM AND A NEWFOUND CONFIDENCE.

By her own admission, Jana Kramer was a mess in the days leading up to her 30th birthday.

She was enjoying some success as a singer after her single “Why Ya Wanna” made it to the Top 5, but she couldn’t help notice how different her life looked from her friends’ lives back home in Michigan. They were settling nicely into adulthood and raising families, while she wasn’t exactly winning in the coupling game.

“When I was 29 I was so freaked out about turning 30, and I think it’s because [of] where I grew up in Michigan, in a small town,” she begins. “A lot of my friends, actually all of my friends, are married and have kids. I kind of went a different direction, and had some . . .” She trails off for a moment. “. . . relationships that obviously didn’t pan out. I was about to have my 30th birthday party and I was just in bed crying. I was like, ‘Oh my gosh, this is not where I thought I was gonna be when I was 30.’”

Jana hadn’t actually planned to do anything on her birthday—besides brooding at home—until one of her close friends convinced her to get out of the house for some pampering at the nail salon. While at the salon, Jana’s best friend (and stylist) from California entered without warning and surprised her. “It ended up being the best birthday ever,” she says.

The carefully coordinated surprise set into motion what was to become an incredibly important time for Jana, in terms of personal growth. She stopped comparing herself to other people her age and just started taking ownership of where she was in her life. She also met her husband, football player Michael Caussin, with whom she’s now expecting a little girl.

“It was the best year of my life. It was refreshing because I cut out all the B.S. in my life,” she explains. “I just became a lot stronger and more confident. I felt more beautiful.”

That sense of confidence and

ownership is a defining element of Jana’s sophomore album, titled *Thirty One*. Like Adele’s blockbuster *21* before it, *Thirty One* is a colorful slideshow of what makes Jana tick and the things that have changed for her as a woman in her 30s.

“I just really wanted to showcase that,” she offers. “A lot of girls get freaked out, especially going into their 30s, but I think it’s a beautiful age.”

Jana celebrates the independence and newfound self-assurance that come with age in myriad ways on *Thirty One*. In her current single, “I Got the Boy,” she makes peace with the fact that her high school love in-



“I don’t have one single regret in my life. I’ve done really stupid stuff and fallen too hard too many times and made some mistakes but I’ll never regret any of them.”

terest ended up marrying someone else. While the album’s first single, “Love,” didn’t leave a huge mark on the charts, it still retains its power as an uplifting statement about finding that special someone. Possible future single “Said No One Ever” takes a meme-worthy phrase for a cheeky, addictive workout.

Elsewhere, Jana seems genuinely glad to be shaking off her relationship blues, and finds new spaces in her voice to convey the feeling. The scorching opening song, “Boomerang” (penned in part by Maddie & Tae), employs some rougher textures and vocal growls to emphasize her refusal to return to a guy. A few tracks later, on “Bullet,” she matches the carnal howl of Aerosmith’s Steven Tyler to express her relief over a relationship coming to a close. She doesn’t name any names, but it’s hard not to wonder if it’s somehow a nod at ex-fiancé Brantley Gilbert. After a few intense months, the two suddenly called it off and went their separate ways. For Jana’s part, she doesn’t seem to harbor any bitterness over the matter.

“I don’t have one single regret in my life. I’ve done really stupid stuff and fallen too hard too many times in love and made some mistakes but I’ll never regret any of them,” she says. “They’ve turned into either really great songs or really great learning lessons. Honestly, I wouldn’t be where I was today with my husband if that stuff didn’t happen, so I never have any regrets.”

Jana co-wrote six songs on *Thirty One*, considerably more than on her self-titled debut—further evidence of her increasing confidence. Among them was the gritty “Last Song,” which is sequenced appropriately at the very end of the album. Jana cathartically delivers a message to a former flame, saying this song is the last one she’ll ever do for him, and even manages to shock with some strategically employed profanity in the first verse.



BABY STEPS

After *Thirty One* arrives in the world, Jana will pause to give birth to her first child—a daughter. As thrilled as she is to be expecting, Jana admits it will be a bit of a relief to be done with this part of the process.

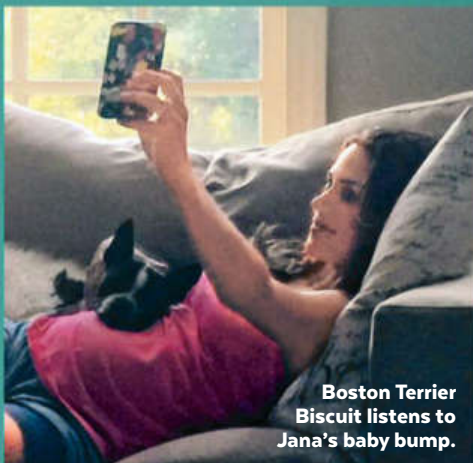
“It’s been not the easiest pregnancy just because I still have all-day sickness, so that can be challenging,” she explains. “Yeah, it’s kind of a bummer.”

In the meantime, the parents-to-be have been picking out everything for their nursery at home and will soon register their daughter. Michael, also a first-time parent, is looking forward to his daughter’s arrival with equal joy.

“My husband is so excited. We can’t wait to hold her,” says Jana. “We got to see her the other day. We had our screening, and just seeing her feet and hands—it’s just so crazy what we can do inside our bodies. It’s nuts.”

So while Jana may have to put up with a little more sickness, she realizes that ultimately none of that will matter when her daughter arrives. That part, she says, will be totally worth any suffering.

“I caught a redeye [flight] the other day and I was so sick,” Jana says. “I was throwing up, and the flight attendants were like, ‘We promise you, you’re gonna forget this moment and how sick you’ve been. It’s all worth it once you hold her in your arms.’ And I know that. At the end of the day, if I’ve got a beautiful happy, healthy little girl, it’s worth it.”



**Boston Terrier
Biscuit listens to
Jana’s baby bump.**





Jana and former TV co-star Tyler Hilton in a scene from *One Tree Hill*; (right) with husband Michael Caussin at the ACM Awards



“I’ve lived with these songs and I’ve taken the time to figure out exactly which one is closest to me and is 100 percent authentic to who I am.”

“When we were writing it, I was like, ‘This is the title and I want it to be as real as possible, just like you’re having a conversation with someone,’” she explains. “How many times do we throw those [expletives] in?”

In those writing rooms, often so intimidating to inexperienced songwriters, Jana began to find her own artistic voice. The nervousness she once felt about speaking up for herself began to recede.

“If I don’t share my voice then my story’s not gonna be told,” she says. “I had more confidence going into the room and saying, ‘This is what I want to talk about, this is what I’m thinking.’ And I also surrounded myself with the people I know I can feel comfortable enough with, and not just with a whole bunch of different writers.”

That may account for the differences between debut disc *Jana Kramer* and *Thirty One*. On the former, she sometimes sounded lost

in someone else’s song and unsure about how to handle it. On *Thirty One*, Jana’s way more in control.

“I was insanely timid on my first album, because that album came together so fast and I really didn’t know who I was as an artist yet, to be frank,” she admits. “I knew I loved country music, I knew that’s what I wanted to sing, but these songs, they didn’t live with me the [same] way as songs that most people have on their first album. This [current] album, I’ve been working on for the past three years. I’ve lived with these songs and I’ve taken the time to figure out exactly which one is closest to me and is 100 percent authentic to who I am.”

She notes that her acting career on *One Tree Hill* never prepared her for what a country music career would be. Acting, she’s quick to point out, always found her wearing a character mask, whereas singing country music required her to be totally real.

Jana wasn’t entirely sure how she would respond to negativity about her real self.

“I was always afraid of letting people down or not sounding good,” she says. “It took a couple years for me to get the confidence to be like, you know what, I’m not the perfect singer but I can sure as hell deliver some great emotions and have fun and deliver the song the best way that it can be delivered.”

Like many other things that occupied Jana’s worried mind in years past, she stopped being so concerned what people were going to say about her work. No longer trapped by fear or comparing herself to others, she finally saw what she had been able to accomplish in a short time.

“I think I tended to look at the negative instead of what was actually great going on in my life,” she affirms. “Once I did that, it was a breath of fresh air.” ■



In Focus

In the third of our four-part series on the Oak Ridge Boys, baritone **WILLIAM LEE GOLDEN** finds his happy place in the world of light and shadow.

STORY BY BOB PAXMAN

The Oak Ridge Boys—Duane Allen, Joe Bonsall, William Lee Golden and Richard Sterban—represent four distinct personalities who have managed to blend together as one unified quartet for more than 40 years. Perhaps one reason for their longevity is that all four enjoy their own personal hobby that keeps them occupied and fulfilled when they're not on the road or making music in the studio.

As The Oaks prepare to enter the Country Music Hall of Fame on Oct. 25, *Nash Country Weekly* sat down with each member to talk about their unique hobbies for a special four-part series. In the third segment of our series, baritone vocalist William Lee Golden reflects on his fascination with painting and photography.

William Lee Golden could easily be described as the Oaks' "cosmic" force, the member who marches more to the laws of nature than the tenets of men. With his mountain-man visage, marked by his long hair and a beard that has undergone decades of cultivation, William Lee would seem misplaced in the confines of a traditional-sounding country quartet with gospel influences. But "Golden," as his three Oaks mates often refer to him, is very much in harmony with the rest of the group. What sets William Lee apart is his hobby, which you can boil down to the visual arts. He loves to paint and has a special passion for photography.

Ever the naturalist, William Lee chooses landscapes and sunsets as his subjects in both pursuits. As he explains it, his love of painting led to him being bitten by the photography bug.

"I wanted to take photographs of landscapes from my travels to have as a reference point for things I wanted to paint," William Lee begins in his deliberate, Alabama-bred drawl. "When you have that picture in front of you, I find that you can put a little more detail into the painting as a whole."

Most of William Lee's paintings were finished on the road, which might appear a cumbersome way to go about making art. But for William Lee, painting became a welcome respite from the rigors of roadwork. "I would have all day to concentrate on something," he explains.



William Lee's paintings were displayed at the Tennessee State Museum in 2010.

"I would take my supplies to my hotel room and set everything up next to my window, and that becomes my studio. It helped the day go by."

In his methodical manner, William Lee would often take months to finish one painting. Soon, his interest in the more immediate outlet of photography began to increase. By his own concession, he grew more serious about photography as a true art form and not merely a sideline.

William Lee started out shooting landscapes, taking his camera along on Oak Ridge Boys road dates. But he especially loves sunsets and has shot them everywhere, from the deserts in the Southwest and the Grand Canyon to one of his favorite spots: Old Hickory Lake, just outside of Nashville. "When you put the sunsets over water, it has a whole different glow," William Lee says, smiling. "The picture almost shimmers." He can't quite explain his fascination with sunsets as his subjects, only allowing that they're "unique." He does know that he has hundreds of sunset shots stored on the computer. "Every day is a different sunset," he notes. "The seasons create a different atmosphere. So, no two are ever alike."

His stunning landscape and sunset photos have caught the attention of several galleries and museums. Over the last couple of years, William Lee has exhibited his photos at the Pensacola Museum of Art in Florida and other



Sunsets are among William Lee's favorite subjects; (below) William Lee shares a pic with his new bride, Simone Staley.



WILLIAM LEE GOLDEN CONTINUED venues. His paintings have been shown at several locations, including a gallery at the Nashville International Airport, the Tennessee State Museum and the Gilcrease Museum of Art in Tulsa, Okla.

William Lee hankers to devote more time to painting, especially on the heels of his recent marriage to Simone Staley, a painter herself at one time. "I would like for her to start back, too," William Lee says. "She has had her hands full the last several years being a single mother. Hopefully, we can devote more time to our painting."

For now, though, photography appears to be the hobby of choice. He allows that he's not done a show in some time, but fans can still view

his work through his Instagram and Twitter pages and his website. "Being able to have an outlet for my photographs is wonderful," he says. "I'm still kind of learning how Instagram works but I want to get better with that. I don't share that many photos, mainly only three or four a week, sometimes."

And when he shoots, William Lee utilizes top-notch equipment. "I've got one of the Canon 5D cameras that has 21 megapixels," William Lee explains with a smile. "That's the best one I've ever had. The picture quality is just beautiful. I use the same lens as the real pros." William Lee went digital a few years ago and has never looked back. "I haven't shot film in a long time," he says.

Before heading out with *Nash Country Weekly* to snap a few photos, William Lee took time to reflect on The Oak Ridge Boys' impending induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame on Oct. 25. He admits that the guys often thought about that magic moment, but never assumed that they would one day get the call.

"Every year, we'd think that we would have a chance," William Lee says evenly. "It kind of got to the point where you would get your hopes up. But it's out of your control and it's not something you can promote to get in there. We are all just honored to be named." And if the guys need a photographer to preserve the occasion, they'll know exactly where to turn. **NCW**

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THE LITTLE **BAND** THAT COULD

THE STORY OF
PARMALEE'S
SUCCESS WAS
A MATTER OF
LIFE AND DEATH.

STORY BY TAMMY RAGUSA



(From left) Matt Thomas,
Scott Thomas, Barry Knox
and Josh McSwain

There are a lot of defining moments in a band's career: signing a recording contract, netting a No. 1 single, winning a major award. But no group expects a bandmate's nearly fatal gunshot wound to be one of those seminal moments.

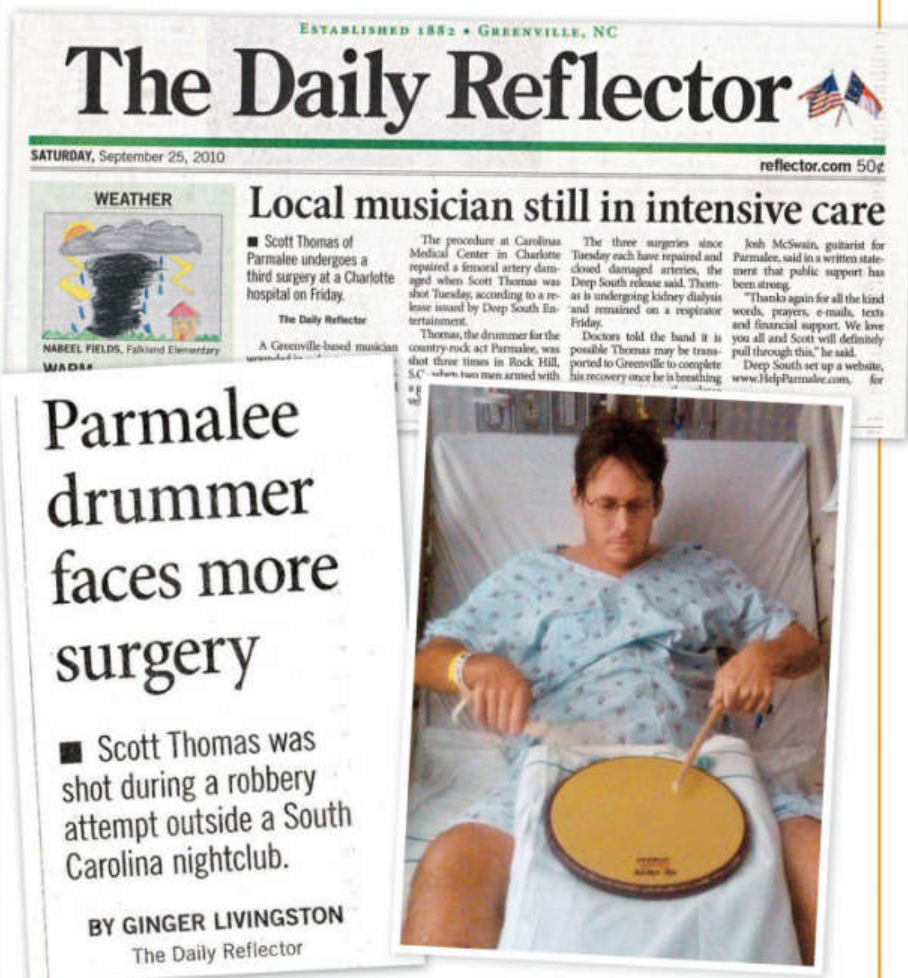
In 2010, Parmalee was just beginning to make noise in Nashville. They had met with record labels and were hoping for a commitment from one. They were a tight crew, having played together since 2001. One September night, members Matt Thomas, his brother Scott Thomas, Barry Knox and Josh McSwain were playing at The Money in Rock Hill, S.C., when a life-changing experience strengthened the connection between them. It's a hard story to hear and, at times, a harder one for the band—whose “Already Callin’ You Mine” is currently in the Top 20—to tell.

Most bands at that stage of their careers jokingly call those small club gigs a “paid rehearsal.” “We had a showcase scheduled in Nashville and the point was just to book a bunch of shows,” remembers Barry, as Josh elaborates, “To get you through to Tuesday night to play another little club to get you through to Wednesday to make enough money [so] by the end of the week, you could get gas to drive here.”

The showcase and the trip, as it turned out, didn't happen.

That particular club wasn't a regular tour stop, but the band had played there before. The crowd was small, but not out of the ordinary for a Monday night. “We knew about 50 percent of the people that were there, which was . . .” says Barry, pausing before Josh interjects, “Six,” and sends the band into peals of laughter.

Following the show, Josh and Barry began to tear down their gear, while Matt and Scott took the sound engineer outside to show off the band's newly acquired RV. It was parked in the club's lot, next to a bustling McDonald's drive-thru.



“We were on the RV for a second and that's when we heard a knock on the door,” Matt explains. “I thought it was these guys,” he says, gesturing toward Barry and Josh.

Scott, who was in the back of the RV, has a vivid memory of what happened next. “When he opened the door, the guys came in real fast and put a gun to his head and pushed him up in the RV,” he recalls. “I saw that there was a problem, a big problem. I saw the gun and the guys. Matt said, ‘Scott, help me out. These guys want money.’”

The situation escalated quickly. Scott had a gun within reach and he stepped forward, keeping the weapon concealed so as not to cause panic. The intruder with the gun made another demand for money before turning his weapon from Matt to Scott and firing. In the dimly lit RV, Scott retaliated and an explosive exchange followed. “It happened real fast once it started,” Matt remembers.

The room falls momentarily silent.

Scott returns to the story. “They had guns, masks, just like the movies.” He shakes his head and adds, “It's sad to say that I had a firearm to deal with this type of thing, but you don't think it's going to happen.” Matt looks at his brother and adds, “It's sad to say, but I'm glad you had it.”

Although caught between the shooters, Matt miraculously avoided injury. Scott wasn't so lucky. “I didn't really know I got hit until I felt my stomach kinda burn,” he recalls. “Then I was like, ‘Oh, he got me.’”

Inside the club, Barry and Josh were alerted that something had happened. “We went running out there and walked in the door to total chaos,” Josh relates. “There's a guy lying on the floor, dead. Scott is lying there bleeding out. Matt is freaking out. It was horrible.”

“It was tough for those guys to see,” Scott says, sympathetically. “I passed out, so they had to see all the bad stuff. They really lived through that.”

"I remember Josh [applying pressure] and the police officer over my head, and I remember saying, 'Please don't let me die,'" continues Scott. "And they said, 'We got you, we got you.' After that, I was out. I was probably heading out when they got there."

Scott's friends attempted to stop the bleeding. "We were trying to figure out where he was bleeding from because I could only see one shot," says Josh. "It was dark in there and with a black T-shirt, you can't see blood. We thought we were holding it. We didn't find out until later that he had multiple [wounds]."

Fortunately, a paramedic who was in the McDonald's drive-thru was able to get additional help immediately and Scott, whose condition triggered an emergency code, was helicoptered to a nearby hospital. Meanwhile, the band was detained for questioning. "The cops didn't know what had happened," Josh explains. "Then they didn't tell us where they took him, and if you get admitted for a gunshot wound, you get admitted under an assumed name, so even once we found out what hospital, we didn't know how to get to him because we didn't know who they had checked him in as. It was a helluva night."

Once the boys found their friend, more bad news was in store. "They took me and Matt into a room and said, 'We give him a five percent chance of living,'" Barry says. "After he lived through the night, they said, 'He may make it, but he might have to lose a leg.' Then the next day they said, 'He might make it and he might have his leg.' From the time he got to the hospital, it progressively got better and better every day."

For Josh, though, there was a defining moment. "That was the other fear, [he's] been unconscious for that long, you don't know if there's brain damage or whatever," he says. "Once he woke up and it was still Scott, it was like, OK, we can fix the rest of this."

The mood in the room grows palpably lighter as Parmalee's story



Where'd they get their name? Their own North Carolina hometown.

continues. Scott remained in a medically induced coma for 10 days and hospitalized for a total of 30. Matt, Barry and Josh were joined by their good friend Doyle Boris at the hospital where they held vigil. "We took shifts. We never left," says Matt as Scott adds, "Doyle never left for 30 days." Scott had to watch the wedding of his and Matt's other brother via Skype from his hospital bed.

The guys all took charge of their friend's rehabilitation. Scott says, "I had a certain amount of feet I had to walk before I could leave the hospital." "Two hundred feet with the walker," interjects Matt. "So, they trained me like it was a marathon," Scott says, laughing. Josh confesses, "They were coming by saying, 'Look guys, this is too much.'" Barry laughs and adds, "The physical therapist actually quit coming. She said, 'Y'all are surpassing what I can do for you.'"

Twice a day, every day, Scott's friends put him through his paces. Once he was released, they took him to a friend's house to convalesce. "We

set up a little hospital room," says Barry, "and brought him out there, so he could sit and heal."

What kept them focused on Scott's recovery? The promise of Nashville, as Parmalee. "You gotta do what you gotta do," Josh says. "When he was in the hospital and they put him on dialysis, I talked to the doctor about giving him one of my kidneys." Barry adds, "We had to stay focused. We didn't have a plan B. Nobody thought about quitting." Apparently, not even Scott had considered that option.

"We came together," Matt says, smiling. "We've got good family and friends—and fans. People raised money so we could be there [with Scott]."

The band interpreted that as a sign. "That's what opened our eyes, to see the outpouring of friends and family come together to support us," begins Barry. "It was like, we must be doing something right. Having all of that happen was even more motivation for us to make sure he got better so we could continue this thing, because we saw how it was affecting people."



HOMETOWN THROWDOWN

Parmalee will return to their hometown for the "Feels Like Carolina Homecoming Show" on the campus of East Carolina University on November 21. For details, go to Parmalee.com.

Fortunately, Scott had insurance through his logging job, which covered the more than \$600,000 in medical expenses. Fans set up a website to collect money for the band since they couldn't play while Scott recovered. "Every local band was putting on benefit shows, then they'd put the money in that account, so we could pay our rent and Scott could pay his credit card bills," Matt says. "Our best friend set up golfing tournaments. That's just the local people you grew up with helping out, and your fans that you've made. That was pretty damn cool."

The following New Year's Eve, Parmalee played a hometown acoustic show, Scott came on for three songs, and it appeared they were ready to give Nashville and Broken Bow Records another go. However, the label already had a band on their roster, so Parmalee cut future No. 1 "Carolina" and "Musta Had a Good Time" with production team New Voice.

They returned in February, at label head Benny Brown's request, to do

a full-band show. "He gave us some songs that he really liked," says Matt, "and he wanted to make sure we'd cut some outside songs. So, we went home and worked them up." Barry chimes in, "Then we came back and played six songs for Benny, and after the showcase he grabbed us and said, 'All right boys, you passed the test.'"

The Broken Bow family knew that Scott had been involved in a shooting, but they hadn't been aware of the severity of his injuries until the band returned to Nashville for another showcase. As Scott, who was still having ambulatory issues, was assisted onto the stage by two friends, the label's Jon Loba unknowingly cracked to the boys, "What's the deal? He think he's Elvis or something?" The band members laugh, agreeing that they were grateful to just have another chance.

"It was the rebirth of Parmalee," says Barry.

The rest, as they say, is history. Did it change the band? "I think we all look at life differently now. We

know our surroundings way better than we did before," Barry admits. "And you will never find our bus unlocked, ever," adds Josh. Matt now warns other artists to keep their buses locked, saying, "Even if you think it's a safe area, somebody might sneak back there."

"Like Tyler Farr," jokes Barry. Josh chuckles and adds, "He keeps showing up on our bus! Who told him the code?"

It would seem that Parmalee's harrowing experience has made them grateful to be where they are—slugging it out with their peers on the chart.

Matt smiles and confirms this: "I'll take slow and steady over no and steady." **NCW**



Walking

From songwriting
to his parenting
(and grandparenting)
style, **TOBY KEITH**
sticks to doing things
his own way—with
no apologies.

STORY BY BOB PAXMAN

Tall

Toby courtesy Shock Ink; perf by Jeffrey R. Staab/CES



Toby explains why "Rum Is the Reason" on *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*.

By all rights, Toby Keith should be a bleary-eyed shell of himself on this late summer morning in Nashville. He'd spent the previous afternoon in New York City for a taping of the newly launched weeknight talkfest *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*, where he previewed "Rum Is the Reason," a track from his new *35 MPH Town* album. Toby and the band spent a late night themselves, catching an evening flight and rolling into Music City around 11 p.m. Early the next morning, Toby was not only rising but considerably shining during a series of media rounds to promote the album.

Seated inside a Nashville production studio, Toby, sporting his familiar straw cowboy hat and jeans, admits that the events of the last 36 hours or so have been a quick turnaround. At 54 years old, Toby finds the turnarounds a bit harder to embrace. But it's part of the job. "It's all good," he assures in a deep voice that still bears a hint of short-on-sleep gravel. "I'm kind of used to it."

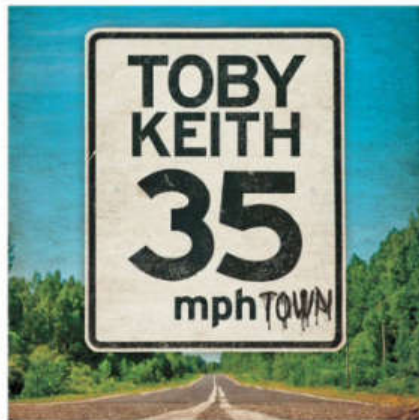
He's operated in the fast lane for more than 20 years, and that Oklahoma-bred work ethic has earned him a place among country's elite. His 20 *Billboard* No. 1 singles and sales of more than 40 million albums vaulted him to a celebrity status that allows him to count the likes of Jimmy Buffett, the aforementioned Stephen Colbert, and country legends Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard among his friends. And that success has stemmed from doing business his own way—not adhering to standard Music Row conventions.

For an example, he cites the songwriting process for *35 MPH Town* as basically the same approach that's worked for his entire career. "We don't get up every day and say, 'Let's write a song by noon.' I never could work that way," he says with a hearty laugh, referring to the "writing by appointment" method now commonplace in Nashville circles. "That's too much work."

And likely, too much pressure. Toby and his cadre of comfort-level co-writers, mainly Bobby Pinson and



(Clockwise from right) The cover of Toby's latest album, available now; vintage photo of a young Toby; childhood pic with sister Tonnie and mom Carolyn in Clinton, Okla.; performing an acoustic show at the Bluebird Cafe in Nashville with writers Bobby Pinson (left) and Scotty Emerick.



TOBY KEITH CONTINUED

Scotty Emerick, deliver the goods using a looser, much less calculated method. "With these guys, they just come and ride the bus and either we write something or we don't," he notes with a grin. "There's no pressure if we don't get something done. We are not obligated to a schedule."

Yet Toby brings the songs in, more or less on time. "I drive a lot of producers crazy," Toby concedes. "They'll come in and tell me that we've got to deliver this album and we haven't heard anything yet and we've got all this budget and everything. And I'm like, 'It'll be there.' So, we walk in and play the first song and we're all good." Adding to the producer's hair-pulling is Toby's rather blatant disregard for making demos. "I don't do them," he says matter-of-factly. "The first recording of the song that we

play in the studio is the demo."

Frequent co-writer Bobby Pinson, who's collaborated with Toby on such hits as "Beers Ago" and "She Never Cried in Front of Me," is on board again with the title cut for *35 MPH Town*, along with "Rum Is the Reason" and others. The title tune finds Toby in a role he genuinely savors, as the provocateur raising a question that most of us might find unsettling. In this case, Toby's lamenting the loss of small-town innocence. Those cities that were once bastions of the good and righteous have now fallen victim to metropolitan woes like increased crime, drug traffic and other sordid scenes, as the song spells out in plain terms. But who's to blame?

"The fun part about that song is the way it was written," Toby begins, easing back into his chair.

"Bobby was coming back from Alabama, I believe, and he was telling me that he would have been here earlier if he didn't have to pass through all those '35-mile-an-hour towns.' And I'm going, 'Well, let's write a song about that.' We just started talking about the people that live in those towns."

At that, Toby's tone grows wistful and nostalgic. He thinks back to his own upbringing in the relatively small burgh of Moore, Okla. "When I was a kid," he starts out, "I didn't know anybody that had a [home] alarm. Nobody locked their doors. You can't do that now, I don't care who you are. Everybody in my neighborhood has an alarm. They lock their doors at night. There is a change that happened."

Toby has played this commentary card before, specifically in "Courtesy



Toby's trend-bucking musical heroes include Merle Haggard (left), Jimmy Buffett (below) and "Beer for My Horses" duet buddy Willie Nelson (below left). "I knew all the stuff from Haggard and Willie, but Buffett always had that cool factor," Toby says.



of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)" and "American Ride," where he addressed the symptoms without necessarily providing the cure. He's never been reticent to tackle touchy subjects, one reason for his position among country's more polarizing artists. Toby concedes that his track record makes his songs more subject to scrutiny.

"As soon as I write something like this, everybody wants to analyze it line by line," Toby says. "They'll say I'm blaming the youth, but if you listen to the song, we're saying you can't blame the kids. It's our fault for the things that are happening. We had a chance to make it better and we didn't. I'm not offering a solution. We're putting the question out there."

Toby's latest album also returns him to his musical roots with Jimmy Buffett-inspired tunes like "Rum is

the Reason," featuring Jimmy's expert Coral Reefer Band, and "Sailboat for Sale," with vocals from Jimmy himself. "I wanted to get Jimmy on there," Toby says. "And for 'Rum Is the Reason,' it just sounded like the Coral Reefers should be on it. So, we've got the authentic steel drums and everything." Toby points to the estimable Jimmy as a songwriting guide of sorts. "There is no question he has influenced my songwriting quite a bit," Toby affirms. "I mean, songs like 'Come Monday' and 'Margaritaville' were some of the first things I remember sitting around and playing guitar to. I knew all the stuff by Haggard and Willie and things like that, but Buffett always had that cool factor."

Talk of Merle and Willie naturally segues into another Bobby Pinson co-write from *35 MPH Town*, "Haggard,

Hank and Her," a title practically guaranteed to induce cringes from the purists out there. But no one was more aware of the implications than Toby himself, who was ahead of potential naysayers from the get-go.

"When we started to write this, I felt like this really wasn't my bag," Toby says unashamedly. "Those kinds of titles can be trite. The title, to me, sounded like one of those kids who comes to Nashville off the bus and he's gotta write a song about Haggard or Hank Williams. But we said, if we're going to do this, we've got to be better than that and it has to be good. And I think we made a good song. It's written so well and doesn't sound contrived." With a laugh, Toby adds, "It took Bobby a little while to push me over that fence. But when we were done, I said that we got it."

TOBY KEITH CONTINUED

For fans hankering to hear the new songs in a live setting, the best advice is you'd better hurry. Toby plays a few dates in November but doesn't plan to resume major touring until June. The days of constant touring and backbreaking schedules were put in the rearview mirror a long time ago.

And again, here's a further break from convention. Unlike many of his peers, Toby maintains a schedule of less than 60 tour dates annually, almost unheard of in this era. "I am pretty much off for the winter," Toby explains. "I mostly tour from June through October 1. It gets me back to see my family."

Spending time with the loved ones has become a first-class priority these days. Daughter Krystal, a singer herself, is expecting her first child later this year, making Toby a grandfather for the third time. Daughter Shelley, whom Toby adopted after marrying her mom, Tricia, has two children. But this grandfather thing is certainly far from old hat.

"Oh, yeah, it's exciting," Toby says with a paternal smile. "I see Krystal every day that I'm home and she's so excited. She wants to



(Left) Toby and wife Tricia at the Las Vegas launch of her SwingDish line of ladies' golf apparel, held earlier this year; (below) Toby and daughter Krystal, who is expecting her first child and Toby's third grandchild.



be a mom." Son Stelen, meanwhile, has left home turf for Arizona State University. "He got a scholarship to business school there," Toby says. "He was good at football in high school and he is considering walking on to the football team at Arizona State." Toby notes that Stelen, 18, has taken only a cursory interest in the entertainment world. "He writes some stuff that he has shown me," Toby says. "But he doesn't have the

bug that Krystal has."

Krystal, at least this far into her pregnancy, hasn't asked Toby for parenting advice. But the day may yet come. "My kids ask me advice about everything but not necessarily about having kids or raising them," he says. "If they're like I was, they'll probably wait. I know the older I got, the more I realized how much my parents knew. My dad knew more than I thought he did."



Late Night Buds

Toby Keith and Stephen Colbert hit it off.



When comedian, actor and media critic Stephen Colbert landed his CBS talk/variety series *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*, taking over David Letterman's seat, one of the first acts he booked was Toby Keith. The bookish-looking Stephen and rough-and-tumble Toby might seem outwardly different, but the two are actually good friends on and off the stage.

"I have known him for a while and we're buddies," Toby points out. "He did my induction to the Songwriters Hall of Fame [in June]. For some reason, we just hit it off. We get each other."

Stephen gained considerable national attention with his hilarious political commentary on *The Daily Show* and his own series, *The Colbert Report*. But Toby is quick to insist that he and Stephen discuss everything but politics and current affairs when they're hanging together. "We just talk about fun stuff," Toby says. "Music, things like that."



“When I was a kid, nobody had a [home] alarm. Nobody locked their doors. You can’t do that now, I don’t care who you are.”

But for parental role models, few can match Toby and wife Tricia for solidarity. Toby and Tricia are celebrating 31 years of marriage, making them one of the longest-running couples in country music. The early years were tough, as Toby will forthrightly admit, but the two pulled together to create a happy marriage.

“We made it to here,” Toby says. “It’s work to balance your career and your family. I would say it used to be more of a juggling act because we worked so much more when I was starting out. We were doing 150 to

175 shows a year, and that is rough.” Through all those early times, Tricia’s support never wavered. Even though friends admonished her that Toby needed to get a “real job,” she stood by Toby’s musical ambitions. And now, that faith has paid off with more at-home time for Toby.

“I only do about 55 [dates] now,” Toby reveals. “In June, I’m going to be gone on weekends and by October, I’m almost completely off. I don’t do hardly anything work-related.”

But is there really a time when he’s not working? Well, not really. Song

ideas are always running through his mind. “I think before this day’s over, I will have an idea for a song,” he says with a confident smile. “I don’t know if it’ll be a great one or not, but I’ll have something. Somebody will say something that inspires an idea or will make me think of a song title. Then I will sing that idea to a couple of different melodies and try to figure out if I’ve got anything. I write almost every single day of my life.”

And, we can be assured, it’s not by appointment. That just wouldn’t be Toby’s way. **NCW**

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

NCW tags along with DUSTIN LYNCH for an action-packed day and night on the road.

STORY BY ASHLEY EICHER

PHOTOS BY MARK HILL

It's 12:30 p.m. on a gorgeous late summer afternoon in the bus compound behind Philips Arena in Atlanta. Gorgeous, but hot. The kind of hot where you break a sweat the moment you walk outside. But as Dustin Lynch steps off his bus to greet me, he doesn't seem to notice the heat.

Sporting a baseball cap, Dale Earnhardt Jr. "Born to Race" T-shirt and gym shorts, the Tullahoma, Tenn., native reveals a boyish Southern charm that quickly puts you at ease. He is funny and confident, with a way of making you feel like you've known each other your entire lives, even if it's only been five minutes.

In just a few hours he will take the arena's stage, performing before thousands of fans in his opening slot on Luke Bryan's Kick the Dust Up Tour, an opportunity Dustin calls a "dream come true."

There's still a lot to do before he hits the stage: a workout, a

songwriting session, a photo shoot and three meet-and-greet events with fans and radio executives are all on Dustin's schedule for the day. But first, he needs to eat.

As we walk down the hallway to catering, he makes a point to introduce me to every person he sees in the hallway before making a quick stop by his drum set.

"Have you met our woo girl?" he asks with a grin.

What is a woo girl?

Taped to the top of Dustin's talk-back mic—the mic he uses to communicate privately with his band

and crew during the show—is a Barbie doll sitting on top of a miniature toy horse. She is affectionately known as the "woo girl."

"Over the years, we've had random things thrown onstage," he says. "The horse came from Southern California. We still haven't named it. The Barbie came from a bachelor party while we were playing Joe's Bar in Chicago. The groom-to-be had to carry this Barbie around the entire night. I guess by the end of the night he was feeling brave and threw Barbie onstage. So we kept her and made her a part of the drum set. She's our woo girl."

Over lunch, Dustin talks about a recent trip to the lake with a few of the guys from his band and crew, and volunteers to teach me how to skateboard that afternoon, jokingly admitting between bites of food that he may have needed a little extra sleep this morning.

"My band and I played a fraternity house at Auburn last night. Let's just say it was a fun, late night," he says, laughing.







DUSTIN LYNCH CONTINUED

While you may think that playing a fraternity house would be a little out of character for Dustin considering his recent success, it's actually how he got his start when he was still too young to play the bars in downtown Nashville.

"I went to a private Christian college called David Lipscomb," he explains. "For the first two years you had to live on campus and Lipscomb had a midnight curfew. To get off campus after midnight, you had to sign out. My friends and I would check out and say we were going to visit our parents for the weekend. I would go down the street and watch the cover bands playing the fraternity parties at Vanderbilt. I couldn't get into any honky-tonks in Nashville, so the only way for me to be around music was to go to Vandy. Fast-forward several years later and I was the cover band."

It was that love of music and the energy he felt being onstage that pushed him to pursue music instead of going to medical school.



(From top) Dustin shows off his skills on the board; working on a song demo during his backstage downtime; tuning up his acoustic guitar before the performance



"I KNEW I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO LIVE WITH MYSELF IF I DIDN'T GIVE [MUSIC] A LEGIT SHOT. SO FAR IT LOOKS LIKE WE AREN'T DOING TOO BAD."

"I remember when I was in college, there was this huge Powerball Lottery jackpot and my room-mates and I were talking about what we would do if we won. Instead of thinking about medical school, I remember saying to myself, 'I've got a gig at the frat house this weekend in Knoxville, I guess I'll go do that.' It was in that moment that I realized, even if I had all the money in the world, I still wanted to play music. I knew I wouldn't be able to live with myself if I didn't give this a legit shot. So far it looks like we aren't doing too bad."

No, he isn't doing too bad.

In addition to spending the summer on the road with Luke and tour mate Randy Houser, Dustin's single "Hell of a Night" recently hit the top of the charts, marking his second consecutive No. 1 single after the platinum-certified, multi-week hit "Where It's At," a feat he calls "the icing on summer's cake."

He hopes that his latest single, "Mind Reader"—one of his favorite songs on his sophomore album, *Where It's At*—will help out other guys when it comes to women and relationships.

"Girls never can make up their minds even though [they] always know what [they] want," he says. "Just tell us what you want. Ladies, pay attention to the lyrics of 'Mind Reader.' Guys love it when you make the first move. Let's be honest. It's awesome. It's hot. That's what the song is about."

With that bit of relationship advice, we grab a couple of skateboards and head to the gym (see sidebar), one of the places Dustin and his band love to go when they are on the road.

"It gives us a chance to get out, see the city and meet new people," he says.

After the gym, it's time for a co-write with Michael Carter, a multi-talented songwriter, guitarist and producer.

"I feel like everyone in the world should know Michael," Dustin says. "He's Luke [Bryan]'s guitar player and also produces this guy named Cole Swindell. Have you heard of Cole?" he says dryly, in jest. "He's this new up-and-coming artist. We think he's going to be really huge."

They grab a couple of guitars and start picking around. Today they are working on two new songs and playfully toying with the idea of reconstructing one of the current songs in Dustin's set, "Where It's At."

"What if when you are onstage tonight, you sing, 'Meow, meow, we don't like cats,' instead of 'Yep, yep, that's where it's at?'" Michael deadpans.

"I think that might offend the cat lovers," Dustin says, laughing. "That doesn't seem like the best decision."

But true to their quick wit and charm, they



While he may not have a set workout routine or consider himself a health nut, Dustin Lynch does like to break a sweat; he hates jogging but loves lifting weights.

"I typically do 1,000 [biceps] reps because, you know, the ladies love the guns," he says jokingly, referencing a line from Will Ferrell's Ron Burgundy character in the movie *Anchorman*. "I get in my creative zone at the gym. It's the one time I'm not on the phone and can sort of check out. I've come up with a lot of song titles and melodies while working out. I think the idea for 'Cowboys and Angels' came to me in the gym."

Play It

Here's a peek at six of the albums on Dustin's current playlist.

1

KICK THE DUST UP
LUKE BRYAN

2

COMPTON
DR. DRE

3

BEAUTY BEHIND THE MADNESS
THE WEEKND

4

ILLINOIS
BRETT ELDREDGE

5

QUEEN OF THE CLOUDS
TOVE LO

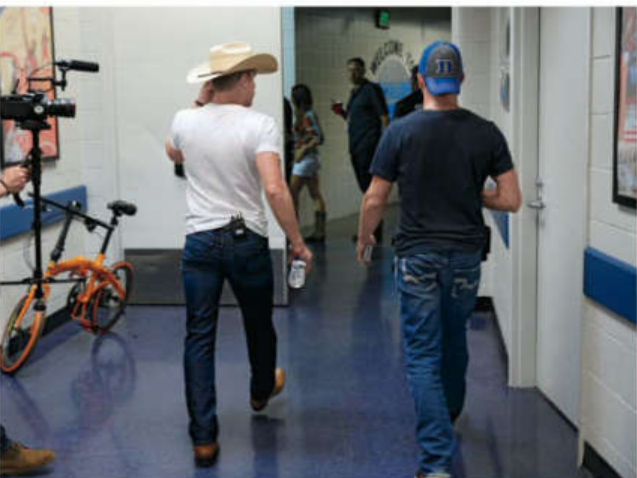
6

WILD ONES
KIP MOORE





Dustin happily signs autographs and other items for the fans who come to see him. (Below) It's showtime!



can't resist the temptation to make everyone in the room laugh. Immediately, the two begin playing around with lyric variations such as "it's a short-haired cat" instead of "that's where it's at."

Before long, it's time to get ready for the show. Fast-forward to an hour later, and Dustin has changed into jeans, a T-shirt, boots and a cowboy hat. He finishes up his photo shoot for *Nash Country Weekly*, stops to grab a couple photos with fans he meets in the parking lot

and heads to the first of his three meet-and-greets for the night.

"Our fans have changed my life and my band's lives," he says. He interacts with them just like he did when we met earlier that morning for our interview—like a friend he's known his entire life.

In the meet-and-greet line, a young girl named Hadley (who might be 8 years old) walks up for her chance to get a photo with Dustin, and she can't stop giggling.

"Hadley, will you look at that video

camera, tell them what your name is?" he says in an attempt to put the young fan at ease. "And maybe tell them that I am your best friend."

He smiles and she can't stop giggling. She pauses and eventually says, "Hi. My name is Hadley and Dustin is my best friend."

"I am? Yes! Thank you, Hadley."

"It is a really fun and exciting time," he says of the previous year of touring. "I learned so much being on the road with Keith Urban and now, watching Luke night after



night on this tour. Luke has taught me that it's OK to have fun, be myself and just go with it. It's allowed me to be more confident onstage."

Lessons and new confidence are things he will no doubt take with him as he launches his very first headlining tour—the Hell of a Night Tour, featuring opener Chris Lane and starting in November. The tour will include major stops in New York City, Boston, Houston, Kansas City and New Orleans.

As we walk out of the second meet-

and-greet and head toward the stage, his manager pulls him aside. The November 20 date—the Denver stop on his upcoming headlining tour—has sold out in less than 12 hours.

"Denver has set the bar," he exclaims. "This tour is something my band, crew and I have been working toward our whole lives. I want it to be a party from the moment a fan walks through the door. From the opening acts to the end of the show, I want the fans to have such a great time that they never want to leave,"

Dustin enthuses. "It is all about making memories for them out here. This is incredible!"

And with that, he heads to the stage. After his set, there is still one more VIP meet-and-greet and an acoustic performance for 50 fans. It's been a busy day but Dustin is loving every minute.

"I have the most fun job in the world. The fans have changed our lives," he says a second time, reaffirming his appreciation. "They have made our dreams come true." **NCW**



LOST & FOUND

BIGG VINNY'S DRAMATIC WEIGHT LOSS CLEARED THE WAY FOR TRAILER CHOIR'S NEW MUSIC.

Trailer Choir, the duo of Vincent “Bigg Vinny” Hickerson and Marc “Butter” Fortney, recently signed with Average Joes Entertainment and recorded the song “Better With a Beer” for the label’s *Mud Digger 6* compilation. It’s the duo’s first deal since Vinny shed more than 180 pounds on *The Biggest Loser* in 2011, giving him a new lease on both his life and career.

“I gave myself Type 2 diabetes,” Bigg Vinny—now with an extra “g”—reveals to *Nash Country Weekly*. “I almost lost my leg, which is part of the story that we never really told a whole lot. I didn’t tell anybody. I didn’t even tell Butter until later.

They were literally two days away from amputating my leg. I realized that my eating bad foods was what put me in that position. Guys come home from the war [who have lost] limbs because they’re fighting for this country, things that they couldn’t help. And then I was in danger of losing my leg, because I was sitting around eating Cinnabons at three in the morning. For me, it became more about that. It wasn’t for vanity or because I thought I needed to look better. It was because I gave myself a disease. I almost killed myself at 27 years old, and that’s not OK.”

Since dropping all those pounds in 2011, the now-svelte entertainer has

adopted an entirely different way of living, helping him maintain his current weight while on the road.

“I eat for nutrition,” he explains. “I don’t eat to satisfy a taste bud. I changed my palate to where I do like vegetables now. For the longest time, if you put a vegetable on my plate, I’d be like, ‘Take the whole plate away.’ Anything that touched a vegetable, I wouldn’t have eaten. Now I can throw down broccoli, asparagus—any type of vegetable, really.”

Vinny’s vastly improved health has also had a positive effect on the duo’s career. The guys are currently working on an album slated for a spring release and touring, achieving things that wouldn’t have been



(Above) Mark “Butter” Fortney (left) and Vencent “Bigg Vinny” Hickerson of Trailer Choir are now movers and shakers onstage; (below) Bigg Vinny shed more than 180 pounds as a contestant on TV’s *The Biggest Loser* in 2011.



possible several years ago.

“I think the greatest accomplishment in everything I’ve seen him do is losing the weight,” Butter affirms. “People can fluctuate with [their weight]. Just to see the way he’s committed to it. It’s hard. The road can be a very difficult place to keep a schedule and planning and meals. You’re in a car or a bus or a plane or an airport, and the temptation with food is almost like an activity. It’s just something to do. I’m amazed at how stern he is with his commitment to eating. People are motivated by him. I think it’s a genuine part of who he is, that he really holds true to this new lifestyle. I think that’s hard for anybody to do, let alone someone that had an addiction.”

The men of Trailer Choir have also found their onstage time to be drastically different since Bigg Vinny’s transition to a healthy lifestyle and his resulting ability to carry, well, more of the weight during a show. “Butter’s an entertainer too,” Vinny notes. “He’s always been so strapped singing every vocal, playing the guitar and all that kind of stuff. Now he’s got the ability to jump out. He can dance as well, and he can do the things that I do. I think the show has become so much better because we can do that together now. There are times where he doesn’t have to have the responsibility of being on the mic the whole time. He can play with the guitar player or jump on the

drum riser, and do that kind of stuff. I think that makes us better than we’ve ever been. We’ve always had a fun show. We’ve always been a fun band. But now, I think we have a lot to offer in the way of music as well.”

“I think that’s a cool thing this go-around,” Butter adds in agreement. “Even the excitement and everything that happened with our first record, it was such a momentum thing, and that’s great, because sometimes you can overthink things. I think this time, in this situation, we are able to find ourselves a little bit after touring for eight, nine years. Vinny’s presentation in the show has changed so much.”

GAYLE THOMPSON



PASSPORT THERAPY

Songwriters often find new inspiration upon returning fresh from a relaxing vacation, after their minds and bodies have been afforded some time off. Such was the case for Big & Rich's John Rich, who had just returned to Nashville from a much-needed holiday with his wife when he was scheduled to write with his friend, "Kiss You in the Morning" singer Michael Ray.

They chose to write in the nightclub inside John's home, outfitted with a full bar, dance floor and stage for live music—plus a gorgeous view of the Nashville skyline. John shared a simple melody that had been spinning in his mind since returning home.

"We sat down at the bar to start writing and digging into this melody," says Michael. "We got to talking about how important it is to get away and cut the world off and just get back to spending time with the person you love. That's all that matters."

While they continued to talk and strum away on their guitars, the words "running away" came up in conversation, leading both to see where else the phrase could take them. "We were just mumbling through when 'I just want to run away with you' came out," recalls Michael. "We were both just like, 'Yes!'"

As with all of their collaborations, the two worked quickly and earnestly on their new song, completing it within a short period of time. "There are some people that you click with and write fast with, and John has always been one of those guys," explains Michael. "We click and we write fast, so much

"RUN AWAY WITH YOU"

BIG & RICH

WRITERS: Michael Ray, John Rich



THANKS, JOHN

JOHN RICH and **MICHAEL RAY's** friendship goes back to 2012, when John was serving as a mentor for The CW's reality competition *The Next: Fame Is at Your Doorstep*, on which Michael was a contestant. After several rounds in the singing competition, Michael was named winner of *The Next* and landed a record contract with the Atlantic Nashville label.

that we don't even worry about who the song will be for. We just write the song to write the song, and hope that it is a great song and hope that it gets cut."

As luck would have it, Michael was already cutting songs for his debut album on Atlantic Nashville. Simultaneously, Big & Rich were in the process of completing their *Gravity* album. "Run Away With You" was included on both projects. Big & Rich had the first opportunity to release the song as a single, which paid off for both John and Michael in the long run. The tune quickly made its way up the charts, landing Big & Rich another Top 20 hit.

"Any time I can write with John, it is a special time," says Michael. "But this one is extra special for obvious reasons!"

ALANNA CONAWAY

The week of Oct. 10, 2015

TOP 25 BILLBOARD ALBUMS

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	2	KILL THE LIGHTS LUKE BRYAN
2	-	SOUTHERN DRAWL ALABAMA
3	-	TURNPIKE TROUBADOURS TURNPIKE TROUBADOURS
4	-	COUNTRY EVOLUTION HOME FREE
5	1	ILLINOIS BRETT ELDREDGE
6	3	MONTEVALLO SAM HUNT
7	5	THE OUTSIDERS ERIC CHURCH
8	4	JEKYLL + HYDE ZAC BROWN BAND
9	6	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
10	8	PAIN KILLER LITTLE BIG TOWN
11	7	START HERE MADDIE & TAE
12	10	OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT JASON ALDEAN
13	9	ANGELS AND ALCOHOL ALAN JACKSON
14	11	JUST AS I AM BRANTLEY GILBERT
15	15	NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL COUNTRY, VOLUME 8 • VARIOUS ARTISTS
16	13	PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES
17	12	WILD ONES KIP MOORE
18	14	TRAVELLER CHRIS STAPLETON
19	19	IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE
20	17	GREATEST HITS SO FAR . . . ZAC BROWN BAND
21	18	SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE JASON ISBELL
22	23	GREATEST HITS: DECADE #1 CARRIE UNDERWOOD
23	16	ELVIS FOREVER ELVIS PRESLEY
24	22	COLE SWINDELL COLE SWINDELL
25	43	ANGELS AMONG US: HYMNS & GOSPEL FAVORITES • ALABAMA

TOP 25 BILLBOARD SINGLES

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	1	SAVE IT FOR A RAINY DAY KENNY CHESNEY
2	2	JOHN COUGAR, JOHN DEERE, JOHN 3:16 • KEITH URBAN
3	4	LOSE MY MIND BRETT ELDREDGE
4	6	STRIP IT DOWN LUKE BRYAN
5	7	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
6	11	BREAK UP WITH HIM OLD DOMINION
7	9	SMOKE BREAK CARRIE UNDERWOOD
8	8	GONNA WANNA TONIGHT CHASE RICE
9	3	BUY ME A BOAT CHRIS JANSON
10	12	LET ME SEE YA GIRL COLE SWINDELL
11	10	FLY MADDIE & TAE
12	13	NOTHIN' LIKE YOU DAN + SHAY
13	14	GONNA BLAKE SHELTON
14	15	I'M COMIN' OVER CHRIS YOUNG
15	20	GONNA KNOW WE WERE HERE JASON ALDEAN
16	18	TOP OF THE WORLD TIM MCGRAW
17	19	BURNING HOUSE CAM
18	17	REAL LIFE JAKE OWEN
19	21	STAY A LITTLE LONGER BROTHERS OSBORNE
20	23	ALREADY CALLIN' YOU MINE PARMALEE
21	22	RUN AWAY WITH YOU BIG & RICH
22	24	DIBS KELSEA BALLERINI
23	25	I LOVE THIS LIFE LoCASH
24	26	I GOT THE BOY JANA KRAMER
25	27	21 HUNTER HAYES

TOP 10 AMERICANA AIRPLAY

TW	LW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	1	SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE JASON ISBELL
2	3	SERVANT OF LOVE PATTY GRIFFIN
3	4	LOST TIME DAVE ALVIN & PHIL ALVIN
4	2	PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES
5	5	WATKINS FAMILY HOUR WATKINS FAMILY HOUR
6	6	THE BLADE ASHLEY MONROE
7	7	DIDN'T IT RAIN AMY HELM
8	11	TURNPIKE TROUBADOURS TURNPIKE TROUBADOURS
9	8	BITTERSWEET KASEY CHAMBERS
10	15	GATES OF GOLD LOS LOBOS

SOURCE: AMERICANA AIRPLAY CHART

rdio TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY SONGS*

TW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	EVEN IF IT BREAKS YOUR HEART ELI YOUNG BAND
2	STRIP IT DOWN LUKE BRYAN
3	GIRL CRUSH LITTLE BIG TOWN
4	CRUISE FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
5	TAKE YOUR TIME SAM HUNT

TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY/AMERICANA/SOUTHERN ALBUMS*

TW	TITLE / ARTIST
1	TANGLED UP THOMAS RHETT
2	NASHVILLE OBSOLETE DAVE RAWLINGS MACHINE
3	CASS COUNTY DON HENLEY
4	CLARE DUNN CLARE DUNN
5	CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN

*DATA FROM SEPT. 28, 2015

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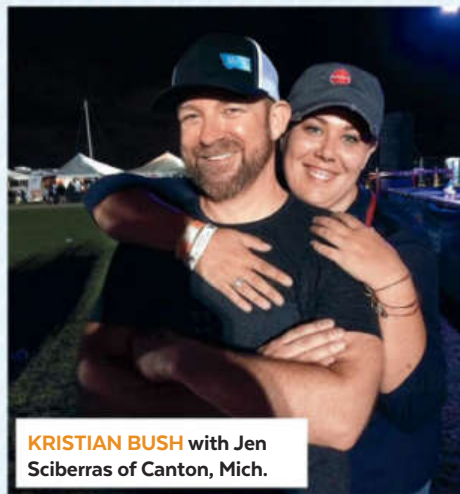
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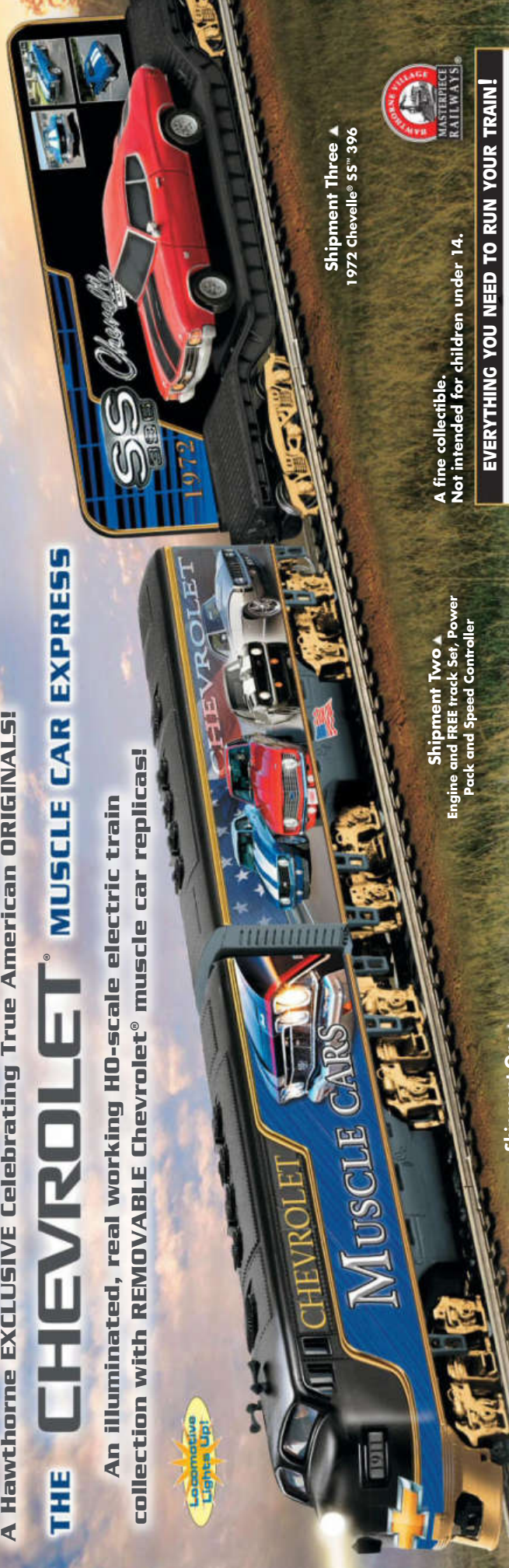
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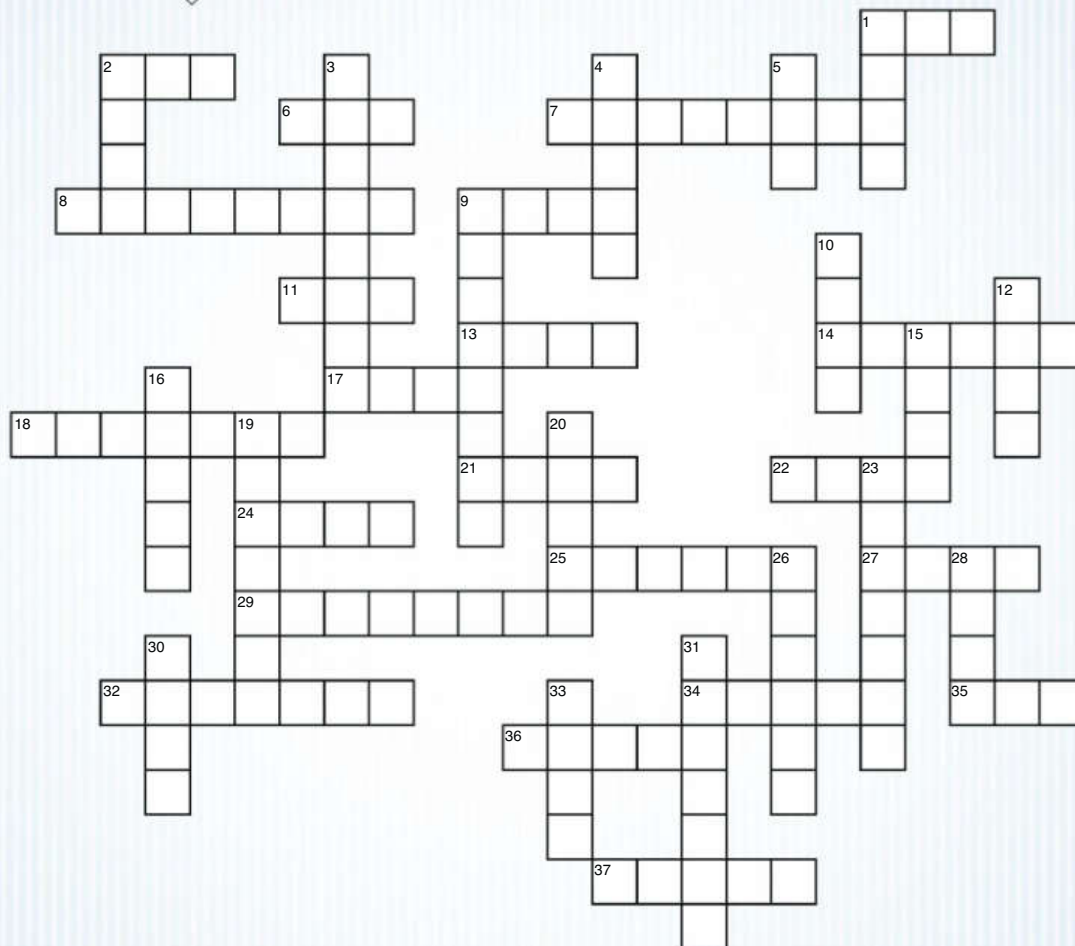
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CROSSWORD

by John Reiman



ACROSS

- 1** Lynn Anderson's "What a _____, My Man Is"
- 2** Homonym for #11 Across
- 6** Kenny Chesney's "_____ Last Night"
- 7** Large city in southern South Africa
- 8** Dover International Speedway is here
- 9** Comic actor Myers
- 11** Suzy Bogguss' "_____ Cinderella"
- 13** Rascal Flatts' "_____"
- 14** "Smoke Break" singer
- 17** "As If" singer
- 18** Miranda Lambert's Roadside Bars & Pink _____ Tour
- 21** Joseph Conrad novel _____ *Jim*
- 22** Reba McEntire's "Until They Don't _____ You"
- 24** Bellamy Brothers' "Rebels Without a _____"
- 25** "It's Always Somethin'" singer
- 27** U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice _____ Bader Ginsburg
- 29** _____ theft
- 32** Brenda Gail Webb, aka _____
- 34** Martina McBride's "Wrong _____"
- 35** Tim McGraw's "_____ of the World"
- 36** Jamey Johnson's "In _____"
- 37** "Twinkle, Twinkle Lucky Star" singer

DOWN

- 1** Dixie Chicks' "You Were _____"
- 2** Opposite of #22 Across
- 3** Close _____
- 4** Alabama's "The _____ Said Take Her"
- 5** Trace Adkins' "_____ Mama"
- 9** *Saturday Night Live* creator Lorne _____
- 10** Mother-daughter trio _____ Angel
- 12** Clint's wife
- 15** Jason Aldean's "Take a Little _____"
- 16** Vince Gill's "I _____ Believe in You"
- 19** Colorado's MLB team
- 20** "Deflategate" quarterback
- 23** State bordering New Hampshire on the west
- 26** 2015 movie thriller No _____
- 28** Diamond Rio's "Imagine _____"
- 30** "Water" singer
- 31** "I Was Country When Country Wasn't Cool" singer
- 33** Jack Kerouac novel *On the _____*

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We get by with a little help from our friends.



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is a Nashville-based photographer and two-year *Nash Country Weekly* contributor. He also produces and directs promotional pieces for Scripps Network. A lover of film, photographing Kevin Bacon has been his favorite shoot so far. Does Scorsese have a country band yet?

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Nash Country Weekly's **2015 Reader Survey!**

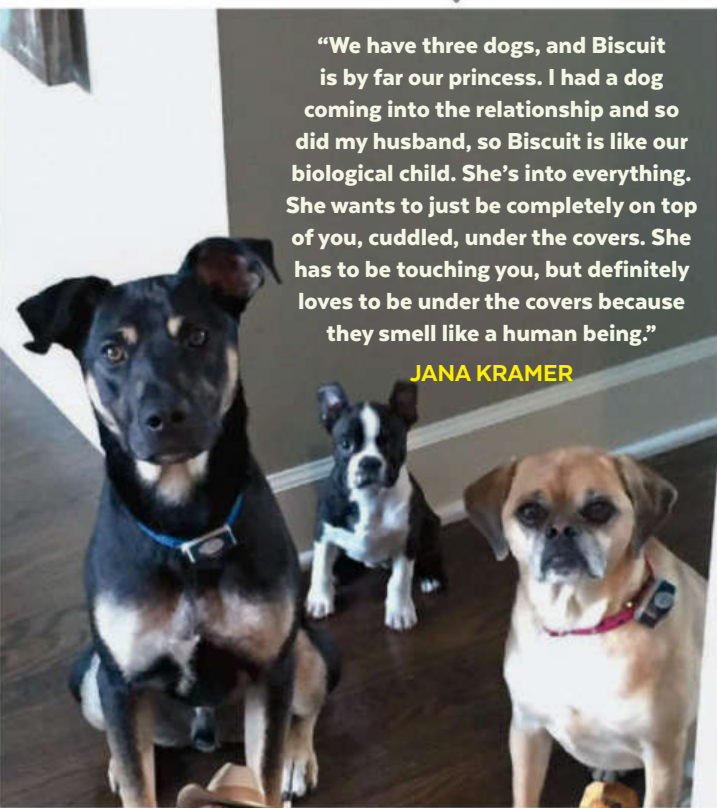
Everyone who completes the survey will be automatically entered in a drawing to win **a trip for two to Nashville to attend the CMA Awards** on Nov. 4, 2015.



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"We have three dogs, and Biscuit is by far our princess. I had a dog coming into the relationship and so did my husband, so Biscuit is like our biological child. She's into everything. She wants to just be completely on top of you, cuddled, under the covers. She has to be touching you, but definitely loves to be under the covers because they smell like a human being."

JANA KRAMER



After seeing **DWIGHT YOAKAM** in his 1986 "Honky Tonk Man" video, **WYNONNA JUDD** invited him to accompany her to the 1986 ACM Awards. The two performers dated for about a year before going their separate ways.



PLUG DICKEL

DUSTIN LYNCH grew up in Tullahoma, Tenn., a town of less than 19,000 that's also home to the **GEORGE DICKEL** whiskey distillery. George Dickel is a fine Tennessee sipping whiskey, but you don't have to take our word for it. As Dustin vouches, "It's hard to beat a Dickel and Sun Drop."



BEARD FACE-OFF

WILLIAM LEE GOLDEN	NAME	CHRIS STAPLETON
76	AGE	37
BREWTON, AL.	HOMETOWN	LEXINGTON, KY.
THE NATURALIST	BEARD TYPE	THE COAL MINER

TAR HEEL TALENT

The boys of **PARMALEE**—**BARRY KNOX**, **JOSH McSWAIN**, **MATT THOMAS** and **SCOTT THOMAS**—call Parmalee, N.C., home, but they aren't the only country stars to hail from the Tar Heel State. Check out these other proud North Carolinians: **RANDY TRAVIS** (Marshville), **RONNIE MILSAP** (Robbinsville), **ERIC CHURCH** (Granite Falls), **CHARLIE DANIELS** (Wilmington), **SCOTTY McCREERY** (Garner) and **KELLIE PICKLER** (Albemarle).



I WANNA TALK ABOUT TOBY

Of **TOBY KEITH**'s 20 *Billboard* No. 1 hits, nine mention "I" or "me" in the title.

"Me Too"
"How Do You Like Me Now?!"
"You Shouldn't Kiss Me Like This"

"I'm Just Talkin' About Tonight"
"I Wanna Talk About Me"
"I Love This Bar"

"As Good as I Once Was"
"Love Me If You Can"
"She Never Cried in Front of Me"

CROSSWORD SOLUTION (SEE PAGE 60)





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